Jordan Times

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Rewards offered for militant leaders

ALGIERS (AFP) — The Algerian authorities have issued wanted notices featuring photos of militant leaders on the walls of central Algiers. The posters, which appeared Monday, targeted seven Islamist anti-government leaders graded at four levels of importance, with rewards offered ranging from $80,000 for Antar Zoubari, the head of the Armed Islamic Group, to $18,000 for lesser figures. The sums are offered to anyone "contributing to the elimination of the criminals." It is the first time that wanted notices have been issued by the military-backed regime in its five-year war against the Islamist insurgents. More than 60,000 people have died in the civil war to date.

Kurdish rebels hit back in Turkey

DIYARBAKIR (AP) — Kurdish guerrillas launched surprise attacks in southeastern Turkey Monday as thousands of Turkish troops chased Kurdish rebels in the Iraqi mountains for a sixth day. The military, which also kept up an offensive inside Turkey, has killed 17 Kurdish guerrillas over the past four days in the southeastern region, the Anatolian news agency said. In the latest attack in the region, the rebels raked a passenger bus with automatic weapons fire, killing one passenger and injuring seven others, some 60 kilometres north of this southeastern city, the Anatolian said. Just before midnight the rebels blocked a main road linking Diyarbakir to the Iraqi border for a couple of hours, checked identification documents and burned two oil tankers before fading away in the dark, local journalists said.

Sit-in to protest new press law ends up in arrests and injuries

Nawayseh says he didn't authorise such gathering

By Amy Henderson
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A protest near the Prime Ministry yesterday against amendments introduced Saturday to the new Press and Publications Law ended in the arrest of several journalists by the police, accompanied by clashes that resulted in minor injuries sustained by several protesters.

Brief clashes occurred after police attempted to disperse the protesters, some 70 strong, who had gone to the Prime Ministry to protest what many of them described as "amendments to assassinate freedom of the press."

"We went to the location thinking that we had the constitutional right to protest peacefully," said an editor of a weekly newspaper. "We were surprised by the presence of police officers who told us that we were not allowed to be there."

Newspapers Tuesday morning quoted Amman governor Talat Nawayseh as saying that he did not receive any request for permission to hold a sit-in, nor did he issue an approval for such a gathering.

Journalists and opposition figures who took part in the demonstration accused the police of assaulting them for no reason other than participating in a peaceful protest against the restrictive amendments to the 1993 press law.

"I was the first person to be assaulted and I was followed by Laith Shubeilat (President of the Engineers Association), Khaled Fkhaideh (from Sawt Al Mara' weekly) and Serene Halasa (from Al Jazirah, a Qatari television station)," he said. "The presence of foreign news agencies did not deter (the police) from attacking us."

The editor, who asked not to be identified by name, told the Jordan Times that his injuries included bleeding under the eyelid and several bruises.

The demonstrators were part of a larger group of journalists and other opposition parties members who have been in an uproar over the amendments which were introduced as a temporary law this week.

The amendments impose strict limits on news coverage and prescribe prohibitive fines — JD15,000-25,000 for violations of its articles. In addition, it imposes a new capital requirement for daily and weekly newspapers, which journalists and editors say will strangle the weekly tabloid industry.

Those who protest the introduction of the law also contend that its enactment as a temporary law is unconstitutional.

During an interview with the Jordan Times following

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Jordanian journalists demonstrate on Tuesday against the new Press and Publications Law. Some 80 journalists participated in the protests outside the Prime Ministry. Police detained at least eight journalists. Others including two women were slightly injured (AFP photo)

Assailants attack media company in Turkey

ISTANBUL (AP) — In the third such attack in two weeks, gunmen opened fire on one of Turkey's biggest media companies early Tuesday, the Anatolia news agency said.

No one was injured. Police found two bullet holes on the headquarters of the Sabah daily and the adjacent building of its TV channel ATV, the agency said.

The motive of the attackers, who escaped on foot, was not clear and there were no claims of responsibility.

Last week a Muslim theology student entered the headquarters of the daily Hurriyet, seized a guard's weapon and threatened the editor.

Hurriyet and Sabah have been the subject of verbal attacks by the Islamist-led government for anti-government coverage.

Both are located on the outskirts of Istanbul along with several other media giants. Private Flash TV was also raided by an armed group.

The attackers, who were arrested later, said they were upset with reports critical of Tansu Ciller, the deputy premier and leader of the junior coalition partner, True Path.

Italian government to swap debt for local projects equity

Italy to advocate Jordan's case at Paris Club

From Francesca Ciriaci in Rome

ITALY IS willing and ready to contribute to Jordan's economic development and to advocate Jordan's case before European and Mediterranean forums, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan said at the end of a two-day visit to Rome on Tuesday.

Italians have a "clear picture" of the Jordanian position vis-a-vis the peace process and the issue of the Holy City of Jerusalem, the Crown Prince said after "successful and very constructive" talks with Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi here on Monday night.

The Crown Prince also announced that Italy promised to campaign for the rescheduling of $2.1 billion of the Kingdom's foreign debt at the meetings between Jordan and the Paris Club scheduled to start in Paris on May 22.

In 1994, Jordan and the Paris Club reached a 3-year-agreement to reschedule $1.2 billion of Jordan's total foreign debt, that stood at $6.5 billion at the end of 1996.

On a several-day European working trip, which includes Italy and the U.K., the Crown Prince is "seeking a more active European role in the Mideast peace process and more substantial European investments."

As a result of the Rome talks, the Italian government has agreed to "swap" the $115 million debt with Italy.

The Crown Prince said Italians showed interest in translating Jordan's foreign debt into equities in tourism

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Dakamseh could receive death penalty; military trial next week

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Ahmad Dakamseh, the soldier who shot and killed seven Israeli schoolgirls, in March, could receive the death penalty, according to Dakamseh's defence attorney Ahmad Najdawi.

Mr. Najdawi, told the Jordan Times that the three main charges which are expected to be made against Corporal Dakamseh are premeditated murder, attempted murder and military mutiny.

"If the soldier is convicted of any of the charges, which are expected to be announced within the next 24 hours, the corporal could receive between a five years sentence or up to the death penalty," Mr. Najdawi added.

The 26-year-old corporal who opened fire on March 13 on Israeli schoolgirls visiting the Baqoura area in the nothern Jordan Valley border had been arrested immediately after the attack and an investigation was launched.

The accused will face trial in a military court. According to Jordanian law, verdicts issued by a military court cannot be appealed.

According to a pervious statement from his lawyer, during the investigation, Corporal Dakamseh had told a three-member military committee that he had not planned the attack and that he had no accomplices.

The trial, which will be presided by Brigadier Ma'moun Khasawneh, will have a panel of four other judges, said Mr. Najdawi. He added that the trial will be held at different locations of military command centres scattered around the suburbs of Amman.

"We expect the open trial to be held next week," Mr. Najdawi said.

Last month, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali said that the soldier who is a father of two will receive a fair trial.

"If he is found guilty of committing the crime he will be punished and if he is innocent, he will be acquitted," said the prime minister.

A group of political activists including the President of the Jordan Engineers Association Leith Shbeilat and former Prime Minister Ahmad Obeidat, had organised a committee after the arrest of the soldier entitled "Jordanian Popular Committee for the Defence of Soldier Ahmad Dakamseh."

The committee has been generating financial and psychological support for the soldier and his family.

Also last month, the Dakamseh tribe sent a cable to His Majesty King Hussein, pledging their allegiance to the Hashemite leadership and expressing their absolute confidence in the military judicial system.

Israeli Arabs barred from buying Jewish land in Israel

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Amid a hail of Israeli criticism over a Palestinian ban on sales of occupied land to Jews, Arabs countered Tuesday that Israeli law has long kept them from buying property in the Jewish state.

Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu slammed as "racist" a threat by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) earlier this month to impose the death penalty on Arabs who sell land in the West Bank or Arab east Jerusalem to settlers. Two suspected Palestinian land-dealers were subsequently found murdered.

Mr. Netanyahu "calls the Palestinian order 'Nazi-like,' but Israeli law is much harsher and more racist," said Ahmed Tibi, a leading Arab-Israeli and close adviser to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. "I am an Israeli citizen and I can't buy land in Israel," Mr. Tibi told AFP. "This is a moral double standard," he said of Mr. Netanyahu's condemnation.

Mr. Netanyahu said Sunday that the ban on land sales to Jews, announced by the Palestinian justice minister, was a "racist law."

"Imagine how the world would react if the Knesset (Israel's parliament) forbid the sale of land to Arabs," he said.

But an Israeli land lawyer said Israel's complex body of land law, in which almost all land is owned by the state, "was set up in order to further the nationalist goal of creating a Jewish state."

"For that reason it works to keep land in Jewish hands," Danny Zeidman, who specialises in land cases, told AFP.

Israel's Palestinian citizens, numbering around 850,000, are banned from owning land in around 17 per cent of Israeli territory, or a third of the country's

(Continued on page 7)

U.S. leaks study of Jewish settlements

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The United States has told Israel that a quarter of Jewish settler homes in the West Bank are unoccupied and that further settlement building is unjustified, an Israeli newspaper reported Tuesday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu quickly denied the existence of the U.S. survey and ridiculed its reported findings, although a senior U.S. diplomat confirmed the contents of the study to AFP.

The Haaretz newspaper, quoting senior U.S. officials, said U.S. envoy Dennis Ross presented the U.S. study at a meeting of Israeli and Palestinian officials last week as part of his effort to revive the deadlocked peace process.

Yasser Arafat's Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has refused to return to peace negotiations until Israel halts all building of Jewish settlements on captured Arab lands where Palestinians hope to create an independent state.

"There is no need to expand settlements because all the settlers can live in units found in existing settlements," a U.S. official told Haaretz in an interview appeared designed to counter Palestinian claims that Washington was not being tough enough with Israel on the settlement issue.

A senior U.S. diplomat confirmed to AFP the contents of the U.S. study, although he declined to comment on how the information was used in media

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Moratinos plans to start where Ross left unfinished

From Francesca Ciriaci in Rome

EUROPEAN UNION (EU) special envoy Miguel Moratinos intends to launch a European initiative to bring the Mideast peace process back on track, a senior Jordanian official said on Tuesday.

After the failure of U.S. special envoy Dennis Ross' recent trip to the Middle Eastern capitals in search for ways and means to reactivate the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations, the European envoy might seek a striking diplomatic victory which could enhance the EU's role in the region and promote the 15-strong union from the status of second class co-sponsor to the role of key player.

In an important phone call to Minister of Foreign Affairs Fayez Tarawneh late Monday, the European mediator reportedly said that he will visit Jordan before the end of this month as part of an effort to break the deadlock in Arab-Israeli negotiations.

Mr. Moratinos was also reported planning to seek support for his new mission from the other co-sponsor of the peace process, Russia, during a forthcoming trip to Moscow.

In a meeting with representatives of the EU member states, Mr. Moratinos also intends to receive formal authorisation and support for the new mission.

After having received Russian support and the member states' mandate, the EU mediator would come to Amman as the first stop of his Middle East tour.

In his phone call to Dr. Tarawneh, who was in Rome accompanying His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on a European working trip, Mr. Moratinos reportedly said that he is "very committed and determined" to explore all possibilities in order to reach a common ground between Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and hardliner Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu.

The Arab-Israeli peace process slowed down after the election of the Likud-led Israeli government of Mr. Netanyahu, one year ago, and froze completely following Israel's decision to build a Jewish settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim, in Arab east Jerusalem.

Mr. Moratinos has not worked out a defined strategy and a precise plan, yet, sources say, but he would be trying "as hard as ever."

Israeli envoy to Jordan withdraws resignation

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's Ambassador to Jordan Oded Eran announced Tuesday that he had withdrawn his resignation after Foreign Minister David Levy persuaded him to remain in his post.

"The minister reassured me that I could carry out my duties in an efficient manner and I have decided to return to my post and to Amman in two or three days," Mr. Eran told Israeli Radio.

Mr. Eran resigned in a huff May 13, only a week after taking up the job, to protest against the government's failure to inform him beforehand of a secret meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu and King Hussein.

Tuesday, Mr. Eran said he wanted to "issue a warning in a bid to improve cooperation... particularly when it comes to such a sensitive question as the Jordanian file."

The Eran incident has highlighted continuing problems in relations between Mr. Netanyahu and his foreign ministry. The post of Israeli ambassador to the United Nations has remained vacant for a month amid disagreement on naming someone to the position and Israel's ambassador to the United States was summoned home for a meeting Tuesday with Mr. Netanyahu amid reports he is to be replaced by peace negotiator Dore Gold.

Ministry secretary general submits resignation

AMMAN (J.T.) — Mohammad Smadi, who was transferred Saturday from his former position as Ministry of Industry and Trade secretary general to the same post at the Ministry of Supply Tuesday submitted his resignation during a Cabinet meeting, however it has not yet been formally accepted, informed sources told the Jordan Times yesterday.

The decision to assign Dr. Smadi to his new position was part of a Council of Ministers' move to reshuffle a number of senior government officials who have been serving as ministry secretary generals or department heads into distinct posts.

Former Director of the Jordan Export Development and Commercial Centres Corporation Mohammad Halaiqa became secretary general of the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

Informed sources attributed Dr. Smadi's resignation to constant reshuffling in different posts.

Dr. Smadi previously held several senior government posts.

Japan extends Jordan $61 million soft loan

AMMAN (J.T.) — Tuesday, the Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf Hunaidi signed an agreement with Mr. Takayuki Kimura, Japanese Ambassador to Jordan, in which Japan provides 7.1 billion Japanese yen (approximately $61 million at current exchange rate) soft loan for the Jordan Human Resources Development Sector Investment Project (Stage II).

This soft (concessionary) loan, which is provided by Japan's Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF), bears interest rate of 2.7 per cent and repayment period of 30 years, including a 10 year grace period.

The fund provided will be used mainly to improve the quality of vocational education through the construction and expansion of specialised school buildings and the provision of educational equipment.

"The newly established special school will also enable a large number of girl students to study various subjects such as nursing and infant education. Thus this project is expected to improve not only educational quality but also the capabilities and the social status of women," Mr. Kimura added.

This loan is a follow-up of the first stage of the Japanese educational loan of 10 billion Japanese yen provided in 1990 for support of primary education.

With the present loan, the cumulative total of the Japanese soft loan to Jordan amounts to 216 billion yen (approximately $1.9 billion).

Turkish army killed over 1,300 Kurdish separatists

ANKARA (AFP) — More than 1,300 Kurdish separatists have been killed since the Turkish government last week launched an operation against PKK bases in northern Iraq, the semi-official Anatolia news agency reported Tuesday.

Another 200 rebels of the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) were wounded or surrendered to Turkish security forces, the agency said.

According to a previous casualty toll issued late Monday by Turkish Defence Minister Turhan Tayan, 1,142 PKK rebels had been slain since the operation began last Wednesday.

The military say only 12 government soldiers have been killed and 25 wounded in the operation.

The PKK, which has been fighting since 1984 for a Kurdish homeland, uses northern Iraq as a rear base to launch attacks in Turkey.

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Defiant Turkey vows to stay the course in northern Iraq

HABUR (R) — A defiant Turkey has shrugged off pleas from Baghdad and its own NATO allies to cut short its anti-guerrilla campaign in northern Iraq, ferrying in fresh men, food and supplies by land and air.

Thirty civilian lorries, manned by soldiers, crossed into Iraq Tuesday, and army helicopters airlifted equipment deep into the remote region in support of the seven-day-old attack against bases of Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) rebels.

But the border remained closed to correspondents and it was impossible to judge the full scope of the operation, launched before dawn May 14 by more than 10,000 troops, backed by tanks, artillery and air power.

State-run Anatolian news agency, citing military sources, said more than 1,300 PKK fighters had been killed so far, with another 200 captured. The German-based Dem Agency, which is close to the rebels, said the Turkish military had suffered "heavy losses," including 12 soldiers killed by PKK land mines.

A much larger Turkish incursion in March 1995 failed in its stated goal of finishing off the PKK, which has waged a persistent insurgency since 1984 in support of self-rule in southeastern Turkey. More than 23,000 people have died so far.

"The operation will continue until results are achieved," Defence Minister Turhan Tayan said in remarks broadcast on Turkish Television. "We will continue the struggle against the PKK terror group, which troubles Turkey, oppresses the region's people and seeks regional domination," the defence minister said.

Baghdad, meanwhile, asked the United Nations to exert pressure on Ankara to reconsider its "aggressive policies" in northern Iraq.

Iraqi newspapers said Foreign Minister Mohammad Saeed Sahaf sent letters to both the U.N. secretary-general and president of the U.N. Security Council urging them "to interfere with Turkey to reconsider its hostile policies with regard to the situation in northern Iraq."

Britain and France — Ankara's NATO allies — as well as the European Union (EU) have demanded Turkey restrict its operation and respect human rights inside Iraq. Even Washington, traditionally a close supporter, has been less than enthusiastic.

Much of the Arab World, already leery of Turkey's growing security ties to Israel, has condemned the move across Iraq's international border. Syria called it "an invasion."

Anatolian news agency said Turkish forces were engaging PKK units in firefights for a seventh day, with heavy bombing against rebel positions.

Anatolian, confirming earlier reports from sources inside northern Iraq, said many PKK fighters had fled the immediate area for territory controlled by Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) along the border with Iran.

Earlier, Ankara asked Iran to seal its border to the PKK. Tehran has made no public reply.

The pro-PKK Dem Agency reported Turkish jets and Cobra helicopters were bombing parts of the Metina area.

The agency said around 100 sorties had been flown in the last two days from Turkish bases at Diyarbakir and Malatya to the Zap valley.

The fresh wave of air attacks follows reports that Turkey's Iraqi Kurdish allies had driven the PKK out of the key northern city of Erbil in a bitter settling of scores at the weekend.

A spokesman for the Iraqi National Congress, citing satellite telephone contacts in the area, told Reuters the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), backing the anti-rebel effort, had overrun all six PKK offices in Erbil and executed prisoners.

"Among the PKK and allied parties, there was a total of 58 dead, 28 of whom were killed after capture," said the spokesman, based in London.

WASTE TURNED BACK: Lebanese workers load a container of plastic waste onto the Belgian carrier in Beirut's port on Tuesday. German Solidarity Fund financed the waste's return back to the north German port of Bremerhaven, after the 36 containers of plastic waste were shipped here illegally from Germany last August (Reuters photo)

Netanyahu encourages settlers in Jordan Valley

PETZAEL, West Bank (AFP) — Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu toured Jewish communities in the occupied Jordan Valley on Tuesday, promising them aid and encouragement in a new swipe at Arab and international opposition to his settlement policies.

"You embody the life force of the Jewish people and its attachment to our land," Mr. Netanyahu told the 52 families who live in this agricultural settlement established 25 years ago some 20 kilometres north of the now Palestinian-ruled oasis of Jericho.

Mr. Netanyahu promised Petzael $3 million in immediate financial aid so the settlement "can continue to educate its children."

Mr. Netanyahu, accompanied by his hardline pro-settlement agriculture minister, former Army Chief Raphael Eitan, also visited the nearby Jewish communities of Na'ama and Maale Ephraim on Tuesday's tour.

The officials were greeted by dozens of children and other residents at each of the stops.

"At least he listens to us," shouted one Petzael man from the back of the crowd. "Shimon Peres built a wall between us and the government," he continued, referring to the former Labour prime minister and architect of the Palestinian peace process.

Mr. Netanyahu reaffirmed his policy of viewing the Jordan Valley as of "vital interest" to Israel and its security, a position shared by the opposition Labour Party.

There is a broad consensus in Israel that the Jewish state must maintain security control over the Jordan River Valley which forms the Israel-Jordan border in any final arrangement with the Palestinians.

Israelis and Palestinians were due to begin negotiations last year on the final status of the valley and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories.

But the election of Mr. Netanyahu and his nationalist government in May 1996 on a platform which called into question further trade-offs of land-for-peace has put the final status negotiations on hold.

The peace process as a whole has been in deep crisis since March over Mr. Netanyahu's insistence on expanding Jewish settlements in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Arab east Jerusalem. Monday the prime minister reaffirmed his plans to continue settlement building and ruled out a U.S. proposed compromise to suspend such construction pending the conclusion of final status talks.

Bethlehem mayor resigns after 25 years in office

TEL AVIV (AP) — Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij is resigning after 25 years in office to spend more time with his family and to write his memoirs, he said Tuesday.

"I am 80 years old," Mr. Freij told the Associated Press in a telephone interview. "It is time I take care of myself and my grandchildren."

Mr. Freij also resigned his post as Tourism Minister in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

Palestinian municipal elections are expected to be held in late summer. President Yasser Arafat has not yet named a replacement to serve until then.

Although Mr. Freij has been hospitalised several times in recent months for heart problems, he said his resignation is not due to health reasons.

"I am in good health," he said. "I have over 20 grandchildren who I want to spend time with. I now have time to read, and next month I may start writing my memoirs."

A Greek-Orthodox Christian, Mr. Freij emerged into the world limelight each December as host to the world at an annual Christmas Eve party outside Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity that draws thousands of pilgrims. Last Christmas, Mr. Freij missed the festivities for the first time because he was hospitalised.

Elias Freij

In December 1995, Mr. Freij presided over the first Christmas in Bethlehem under Palestinian rule, just days after Israeli troops pulled out of the city they had occupied since 1967.

Over the years, Mr. Freij's moderate views brought him in conflict with both the PNA and the Israeli government. He was one of the few Palestinians to meet openly with Israeli officials when others feared such meetings would brand them as collaborators.

"Israel is part of the Middle East, and the Arabs must make peace with it. There is no other solution," he often said. But, he added, Israel is stronger, "so it should be more magnanimous."

Mr. Freij was first elected mayor of Bethlehem in 1972, five years after Israel occupied the West Bank. He has been a member of the city council since 1946. In 1994, Mr. Arafat named him Palestinian minister of tourism.

Mr. Freij takes pride in having never lost an election. He was the only mayor to remain in office after the PNA took control of West Bank cities from Israel in 1995. Mr. Freij said he never found time in his 12-hour workday as mayor even to read the newspapers.

"I would take the papers home with me in the hope I could read them at night," Mr. Freij said. "But I would be too tired to read them."

Syrian team aims to renew trade links with Iraq

BAGHDAD (AFP) — A Syrian business delegation, on a first such visit to Baghdad since the early 1980s, said it aims to renew economic and industrial links with Iraq.

"Our visit aims to reactivate commercial and industrial cooperation between the two brotherly countries," said Rateb Shallah, president of the Union of Syrian Chambers of Commerce (USCC), as his delegation arrived late Monday. Mr. Shallah, at the head of a seven-member USCC delegation, told AFP the visit was approved by the Syrian government and that "the signing of an economic and industrial accord is possible."

"We could conclude an accord to boost our commercial and industrial cooperation, especially in the field of investments," said the Syrian official, whose delegation travelled overland to Baghdad.

"There is no form of cooperation between Iraq and Syria at present. It is time for the two countries to renew economic and industrial links... for the good of their peoples," Mr. Shallah said. A USCC official said Monday in Damascus that the group will ask Iraqi officials to import Syrian goods under the "oil-for-food" accord between Baghdad and the United Nations.

Police probe whether Palestinian slain over land deal

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Palestinian police investigated Monday whether a building contractor was slain for selling land to Israelis, while the sides' leaders traded blame for the continuing freeze in Middle East peace talks.

The killing of contractor Harbi Abu Sara would be the second related to land sales since Palestinian Justice Minister Freih Abu Medein declared earlier this month that Palestinians caught selling land to Jews should face the death penalty.

Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu called the killing "a horrible development... It is ghastly, monstrous, to issue a law that says that anyone who sells to Jews should be executed."

The murders are "unacceptable in human terms and unacceptable in peace terms," he said.

Maher Na'san, head of criminal investigations in Al Tireh neighbourhood of Ramallah where Abu Sara's body was found Saturday, said the man may have been killed because he was known to have collaborated with Israel.

"It is a strong possibility that whoever killed him was someone who he had informed on to the Israelis," Mr. Na'san told the AP. "We are looking at all possible reasons for the murder."

Mr. Na'san said Abu Sara, 48, was arrested eight months ago by Palestinian authorities on charges of having spied for Israel during the 1987-1993 uprising and of mediating land sales to Israelis. He was released without trial two months later on the understanding that his activities were "a thing of the past and that he had cut off all his ties with the Israelis," Mr. Na'san said.

During the intifada, Israeli authorities had many Palestinian informers, who provided tips that led to the arrest and sometimes death of activists.

Abu Sara was from the village of Ein Yabrud, east of Ramallah. Police said he had been shot four times in the head with a pistol. Earlier this month, the corpse of Farid Bashiti, a 70-year-old Jerusalem land dealer accused of selling land to Jews, was found in Ramallah.

Palestinian human rights activist Bassam Eid called sales of Palestinian land to Israelis "a dangerous national violation," but said extra-judicial killings were not the solution.

The issue has arisen amid a two-month stalemate in peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians.

Israel Radio reported that Mr. Netanyahu's aide Yitzhak Molcho met senior Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat Monday night, but Mr. Erekat told the Associated Press no such meeting took place.

Mr. Molcho met President Yasser Arafat ten days ago in an unsuccessful attempt to revive the negotiations, Israeli media reported.

Sunday night, U.S. ambassador Martin Indyk said the trust that was the foundation of the peace accords is gone. He blamed Palestinian "terror attacks" and unilateral acts by Israel, such as its March decision to break ground for a new Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem.

Mr. Indyk spoke two days after U.S. envoy Dennis Ross left the region without any prospects for a resumption of peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians. In a letter to President Clinton, Mr. Arafat complained that Mr. Ross's mission had accomplished nothing and asked Mr. Clinton to intervene personally.

But Mr. Indyk told the Israel-America Chamber of Commerce that "both sides have to make decisions in order to further the peace process and the U.S. cannot do it in their stead."

Speaking in the Palestinian-controlled Gaza Strip, however, Mr. Arafat was critical of the United States — saying the peace process had collapsed "because there is no American pressure to save (it)."

"We are worried (about) the U.S. position," said Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION
Tel. 773111-19
PROGRAMME TWO

15:35 ..... French Programmes
16:00 ..... America's Funniest People
16:30 .....Spell Binder
16:50 .....Doc. — Forests of the World
17:15 .....Border Town
18:00 .....French Programmes
19:00.....News in French
19:30 .....News Headlines
19:35 .....Comedy — Grace Under Fire
20:10 .....Challenges
21:10 Drama — Spencer for Hire
22:00 .....News in English
22:30 .....Cobra
23:15 .....Hart to Hart

PRAYER TIMES

04:00 .....Fajr
05:30 .....(Sunrise)Duha
12:32 .....Dhuhr
16:13.....'Asr
19:34.....Maghreb
21:04.....'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 827126
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.
Church of Nazarene Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Fine weather conditions will prevail with winds northwesterly moderate to active. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Amman 14/25
Aqaba 21/34
Deserts.....13/30
Jordan Valley 18/33

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 25, Aqaba 34 Humidity readings: Amman 57 per cent, Aqaba 26 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

Dr. Mukhles Halaseh ..5519220
Dr. Fadl Al Khatib.....865456
Dr. Ruhi Sukkar..... 85647
Dr. Fadl Al Khatib 865456
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy ...890280
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Al Salam pharmacy ..636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281484
Al Quds pharmacy .....(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Rabah Al Bourini...990312
Khalifeh pharmacy ...985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre .637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police.....843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints.....661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints.....897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs.....623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, 644281/6
Akileh Maternity. 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen777101/3
Al-Bashir, ...775111/26
Army, Marka.....891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital.....674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery ..865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital(09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (02)247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200 where it should always be verified.

Information on other flights are supplied on phone 08 (52700) or 08(53250).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

08:00..... Damascus (RJ)
08:35 .....Larnaca (RJ)
09:35 .....Jeddah(RJ)
09:50 ..Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
15:40....New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:05 .....Istanbul (RJ)
17:30.....London (RJ)
17:40..Toronto, Montreal (RJ)
17:40.....Frankfurt (RJ)
19:05.....Rome (RJ)
19:20...Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
20:05.....Paris, Brussels (RJ)
00:10.....Beirut (RJ)
04:55...Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
05:30.....Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights

08:15....Karachi, Abu Dhabi (PK)
10:30..... Cairo (MS)
11:00 ...Sanaa, Hudaidah (TY)
12:00 .....Jeddah (SV)
12:55.....Bucharest (RO)
13:10 Doha, Abu Dhabi (GF)
14:30 .....Tunis (TU)
16:20 .....Algiers (AH)
17:00 .....Doha (Q7)
19:00 ..... London (GA)
19:30....Istanbul, Damascus (PK)
20:40.....London (BA)
21:10 ..... Beirut (ME)
21:10 ...Paris, Damascus (AF)
21:30 .....Tel Aviv (LY)
23:20 .....Istanbul (TK)
23:25 .....Amsterdam (KL)
23:30 .....Athens (OA)
05:15.....Ankara (TK)

DEPARTURES

09:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
10:50 .....Rome (RJ)
11:45 .....Berlin, London (RJ)
12:00 .....Istanbul (RJ)
12:30.....Casablanca (RJ)
17:35.Kula Lumpur (add) (RJ)
20:20 .....Colombo (RJ)
20:35 .....Beirut (RJ)
21:05 ...Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
21:45.....New Delhi (RJ)
21:50 .....Bombay (RJ)
21:45..Calcutta, Bangkok (RJ)
22:05 .....Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
23:40 .....Sanaa (RJ)
01:30 .....Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights

06:50.....Larnaca (CY)
08:45 .....Beirut (ME)
09:25 .....London (BA)
10:00 Damascus, Istanbul (PK)
11:20 .. ..Cairo (MS))
12:40...Hudaidah, Sanaa (TY)
13:30 .....Jeddah (SV)
14:00 ..Bahrain, Muscat (GF)
15:30.....Tunis (TV)
15:50 .....Vienna (OS)
17:20 .....Shariqah (AH)
17:50 .....Doha (Q7)
20:15 Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PK)
21:40 .....Berdasar (CA)
22:50 ..... Tel Aviv (LY)
23:55 .. Damascus, Paris (AF)
00:25 ..... Amsterdam (KL)
00:25 .....Ankara (PK)
04:00.....Athens (OA)
06:15.....Istanbul (TK)

King receives credentials of newly-appointed ambassadors: His Majesty King Hussein Tuesday receives the credentials of four newly-appointed ambassadors to Jordan at the Royal Court. These are, from left to right, Spanish Ambassador Eudaldo Mirapeix Martinez, Norwegian Ambassador Jan J. Jolle, British Ambassador Christopher Battiscombe and Ecuadoran Ambassador Manuel Sefalos. The presentation ceremony was attended by Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh, Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid, Director of the National Security Council Prince Talal Ben Mohammad, Deputy Prime Minister for Services Affairs and Minister of Administrative Development and acting Foreign Minister Abdullah Ensour (Petra photo)

Palestine Airlines to launch first commercial flight from Jordan

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The first commercial flight by Palestine Airlines will leave Amman on June 1, following an agreement reached between the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Jordan's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), Palestinian Ambassador to Jordan Omar Khatib said Tuesday.

Mr. Khatib said the agreement was concluded here last week, following a visit by Palestinian Aviation Director Brigadier Fayiz Zaidan during which he met with his Jordanian counterpart Captain Jasser Zayyad.

The agreement included launching two weekly flights from Al-Areesh in Egypt to Amman as a temporary measure until Israel permits the PNA to operate its own airport in the Gaza Strip.

Talks with Israel over opening Al-Dahaniya Airport in Gaza were deadlocked following Israeli demands to control security at the airport. The PNA rejected the demand and insisted that security of the airport was solely a Palestinian responsibility.

But the Jewish state did allow Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's private jet to land in the Gaza Strip earlier this year.

According to an advertisement in the local press, Palestine Airlines will operate flights weekly, on Sunday and Wednesday starting June 1.

The airline will fly four Dutch-made Fokker-50 planes to transport passengers to and from the Gaza Strip, Mr. Khatib said.

Last month, the first Palestinian plane landed at Marka Airport to transport more than 80 Palestinian students to Casablanca to join a Moroccan government-financed aviation training programme.

Last year, Palestine Airlines launched its first ever flight carrying Palestinian pilgrims from the Palestinian self-rule areas to the Muslim holy sites in Saudi Arabia.

Jordan joined five other countries in the region in allowing Palestine Airlines to operate to and from their territory. The list includes Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Greece, Turkey and Cyprus.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Independence Day observed in Jordan

AMMAN (Petra) — All ministries, government departments and public institutions will be closed on May 25 in observance of Jordan's Independence Day, according to a communiqué issued Tuesday by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali.

Prince Faisal meets with Dubai crown prince

DUBAI (Petra) — HRH Prince Faisal Ben Al Hussein Monday met with Crown Prince of Dubai Sheikh Mohammad Ben Rashed Al Maktoum as well as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) defence minister to review bilateral relations and cooperation in the aviation and air transport fields. The meeting was attended by Director of the Dubai Civil Aviation Department Sheikh Ahmad Ben Said Al Maktoum and Jordanian Consul to Dubai Sheikh Mashour Zaben. Prince Faisal attended the opening of the 1997 regional conference on civil aviation and visited the Dubai Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Jordanian ambassador received in Saudi Arabia

JEDDAH (Petra) — Saudi Arabia's Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and Aviation and General Inspector of the Armed Forces Prince Sultan Ben Abdul Aziz received the Jordanian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Hani Khalifa and the two discussed bilateral relations as well as their means of enhancement.

Industrial exhibition to open at Marj Al Hamam

AMMAN (Petra) — Under Royal patronage, a week-long industrial exhibition will be opened on May 27 at the Marj Al Hamam International Exhibition. Participating in the exhibition will be 130 Jordanian industrial companies. Auxiliary to the exhibition, a pan-Arab economic symposium will convene to discuss the facilitation of commercial exchanges and movement of individuals, capital and goods in the Arab World.

Minister meets with World Bank officials

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Agriculture Mujhem Khreisha Tuesday met with a visiting joint delegation from the World Bank and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to review the agricultural situation in Jordan and plans to develop the agricultural sector. Mr. Khreisha also discussed the ministry's privatisation plans and the Kingdom's financial and technical needs to increase production and agricultural exports destined for European and Arab markets.

Cabinet meeting covers corruption, oil refinery

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali informed a regular Council of Ministers session Tuesday that the Department of Anti-Corruption referred 260 corruption cases to court, according to Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi.

Subsequent to the Cabinet meeting, he affirmed that the majority of these cases are considered minor and that they are soon to be publicly announced. The following information was detailed by Dr. Mutawi:

• Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Mohammad Saleh Horani submitted a report covering international firm bids to establish a new oil refinery in Aqaba, expected to cost $2.2 billion.

Mr. Horani described the first consortiums as grouping three American companies and the other as grouping Jordanian, Japanese and other firms.

These consortiums have submitted bids for the project, he said.

The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources will soon examine the bids in conjunction with other concerned ministries and with the help of experts from the World Bank.

• Minister of Interior Nathir Rashid presented a statistical report covering the number of foreigners living in Jordan, noting that less than 500,000 are registered with the ministry but that approximately 200,000 more are estimated to reside in the Kingdom.

• Minister of Trade, Industry and Supply Hani Mulki covered the outcome of his visits to Morocco and Britain where he attended one seminar regarding the development of the Mediterranean region countries and another on investments in the Kingdom.

• The Cabinet approved an agreement signed in Paris with the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) on establishing a UNESCO multi-purpose office in Amman, specialising in culture and communications affairs.

It also approved the formation of a delegation led by Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Tawfiq Kreishan to attend a meeting on rural development to be held in Cairo in June.

Ministers tour refugee camps in east Amman

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Public Works and Housing Nasser Lawzi and Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf Tuesday initiated inspection tours to the Hittin and Hashemi Shamali refugee camps in eastern Amman. These refugee camps are to be included in the first phase of the social security net programme which the government plans to implement at the projected cost of JD 430 million.

The two ministers examined the infrastructure of the two camps and reviewed the refugees' stated needs.

They also convened meetings with representatives of the two camps to discuss topics pertaining to health, public transport and cleaning services as well as an increase in the amount of water pumped to the camp residents.

Earlier this month, Dr. Khalaf presented the Ministry of Planning's programme, covering the social security net, at a meeting attended by His Majesty King Hussein.

She stated that JD 173 million of this sum has been directed towards the refugee camps in Jordan.

The rest will go to urban areas to improve infrastructure services.

At meetings with camp residents, the two ministers described these infrastructure projects as including road asphalt, water and sewage networks as well as road lighting.

The two ministers affirmed that they also pledged to ensure improvement of health services and will study increasing the distribution of water supplies.

According to Ministry of Planning estimates, JD 2.5 million will be spent on the camps' infrastructure including social services centres, expected to cost JD 500,000 each.

According to Dr. Khalaf, the camp residents numbers are estimated at 228,000.

The two ministers were accompanied on their visits by the directors of the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC), which will sponsor these projects, the director of the Department of Palestinian Affairs at the Foreign Ministry and local officials.

Premier addresses business community

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Tuesday urged the Jordanian business community and industries to intensify their efforts and improve product quality so as to boost exports.

The prime minister was addressing the opening session of the 23rd meeting of the Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce and said that the chambers of commerce represent Jordan's real economic power and group veteran businesspersons who have contributed to the Kingdom over the past few years.

However, Dr. Majali described Jordan as currently suffering from a large trade deficit, corresponding to approximately one-third of the gross domestic product.

He emphasised the need for domestic reforms to help boost service and commodities production and improve quality so that the Kingdom might increase exports and enter into new markets abroad.

Jordan faces the challenge of producing high-quality goods at minimum cost through efficient management, skilled workers and modern research methods, the prime minister stated.

"We have a trade surplus with countries which import our fertilisers as well as some Arab states, but we have a trade deficit with the rest of the world, notably the United States, Japan and the European Union," he maintained.

"Hopefully, following the conclusion of the partnership agreement with Europe and the investment agreement with the United States, Jordan will be able to reduce its trade gap and trade deficit margin as, only then, can we provide global markets with goods catering to international specifications," Dr. Majali cautioned.

Stating his admiration of Jordanian banking, financial and insurance institutions, Dr. Majali expressed optimism that Jordan would succeed in developing its market, transaction methods, and in reducing marketing and production costs.

"Though the government will not interfere in merchants' methods of conducting business, it has a duty to come to the aid of people in the face of manipulation, profiteering and monopoly and the government will be ready to jointly work with the business community to prevent monopoly and abuse of the Jordanian commercial sector," the premier said.

Jordan has always served as a land bridge for goods and travellers between the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, Syria and Palestine through Ma'an, Petra, Jerash and Ramtha, he added.

Federation Chairman Haidar Murad addressed the meeting stating that Jordan is facing regional developments which have negatively impacted the Jordanian economy and caused a recession.

The public and private sector should concentrate efforts to introduce legislative amendments to help redress the situation, he said.

Conceding that the prices of various commodities increased after a government decision to float prices, Mr. Murad described the present trend of high prices as a temporary stage.

He urged the government to remove obstacles currently stalling the export of goods to Iraq, noting that Jordanian merchants have recently succeeded in concluding $130 million worth of food and medicine contracts with Iraq.

Mr. Murad also encouraged the government to strengthen ties with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), seek to end Israeli impediments to Jordanian-Palestinian trade and emphasised that Palestinian markets are promising and might incorporate a great deal of Jordanian goods.

He voiced the business community's support for government plans to transform Aqaba into a free-trade zone.

Other speakers suggested that the government create industrial estates in Mafraq, Zarqa, Tafileh and Jerash.

Second group of Mafraq students suffer food poisoning

By Rana Husseini
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Fifty female students from the Safawi Secondry School were Tuesday admitted to a health centre in Mafraq, suffering from food poisoning, according to officials.

They were released the same day.

Officials at the Safawi Health Centre (SHC), where the students were treated, told the Jordan Times Tuesday that the majority of students suffered mild food poisoning.

"There were no critical cases, most students suffered only cramps, and were treated and released," the attending SHC doctor said.

The students had eaten cheese at school, distributed by the Ministry of Education, as a support, Mafraq Governor Ahmad Lawzi affirmed.

He told the Jordan Times that the problem was not with the cheese, "but rather with the way it was stored."

"Six tonnes of cheese were distributed to Mafraq schools on Saturday, but it seems that some of it was improperly stored and distributed, causing the cheese to turn rancid," Mr. Lawzi said.

On Monday, 25 female students from Um Al Naee'am School in Mafraq were also admitted to hospitals after consuming the same brand of cheese.

These students were also treated and discharged from the hospital the same evening.

Mr. Lawzi affirmed that he ordered the removal of the entire cheese shipment and ordered that it be destroyed.

According to a hospital official, blood, excretory and urine samples were taken from the sick students.

Samples of the white cheese were also taken for testing purposes, he added.

Meanwhile, during the past two days, four people, including three children, were killed in vehicle accidents in the Kingdom.

The deceased were identified as Baha Ahmad, 4, Rahmeh Matrouk, 10, Amar Salman, 14, and Raoufah Mohammad, 65.

Infertility specialists slated to visit Jordan

DUBAI (J.T.) — Two international specialists are to visit Jordan this week to mark the Middle East launch of a breakthrough in infertility treatment, an Organon Middle East Ltd. statement said.

Dr. Henk Jan Out, NV Organon's International Medical Adviser on Pro-fertility from Oss in the Netherlands and Dr. Basil Tarlatzis, President of the European Society for Human Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE) and Associate Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, Greece, will address a gathering of more than 200 local infertility specialists to launch Puregon, a drug which promises infertile couples a 25 per cent increased chance of conceiving when compared with traditional treatments, the statement said.

In the largest prospective study ever taken in IVF (known as the European Multicentre Trial), infertile couples were shown to have a 25 per cent chance of becoming pregnant with the use of Puregon, a follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) produced by recombinant DNA technology, as opposed to a 20 per cent chance with the older, urinary-based products, according to Dr. Out.

Both doctors have been closely involved in the research and development of Puregon. Dr. Out was the first author of the European Multicentre Trial, which compared Puregon with a traditional treatment, while Dr. Tarlatzis was one of the key investigators in the trial, conducted across 18 European treatment centres between March 1992 and August 1993, according to the statement.

Doctors in every centre involved in the trial found that the treatment with Organon's laboratory-produced Puregon was more effective in inducing the development of a number of mature eggs, compared with urinary-derived FSH, the statement said.

In the long run, this translated into a significantly higher number of babies born to women in the group treated with Puregon.

"We didn't expect to develop a product that was a significant improvement on what was currently available, yet our results revealed that women treated with recombinant FSH are likely to benefit from higher cumulative pregnancy rates after one cycle of egg collection than those treated with urinary FSH," Dr. Out said.

Puregon will be launched at the Marriott Hotel in Amman on May 21 and the treatment will be available to patients at IVF clinics and fertility treatment centres in the UAE immediately, the statement concluded.

WHAT'S GOING ON

CONCERT

* Performance by the Trio of the National Music Conservatory Timour Ibraguimov, Ali Musa, and Tsonka Al Bakri at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

LECTURES

* "Hellenism During the Umayyad and Abbasid Periods as Evidenced from Archaeological Finds" by Dr. Konstantinos Politis at Al Hussein Sports City at 5:00 p.m.

* "The Intellectual and Social Conditions in Early Abbasid Times. The Need to Translate Greek Scientific Texts by Professor George Saliba at the British Council, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m.

* "The Problems of Arab Nationalism" by Dr. Mohammad 'Issa at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman at 6:30 p.m.

HUDC grants JD 168,400 tender to local firm

AMMAN (Petra) — The Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC) Tuesday granted a JD 168,400 tender to a local construction firm in order to provide infrastructure for a housing estate in Shobak, south of Ma'an, to benefit limited-income groups and workers.

The JD 186,400 contract, signed by HUDC Director General Yousef Hiyasat and the firm's general manager, stipulates laying the infrastructure and civil works for housing units to be built on 117 plots of land covering an area of 60 dunums.

The work is slated to be completed in 240 days and entails the manufacturing of a 1,300 square metre road grid, 2,780 metres of water networks and the construction of electricity cables and telephone networks as well as building retaining walls and green areas.

The HUDC director maintained that beneficiaries will be able to purchase land for homes at reasonable cost and obtain loans through the help of the corporation.

Priority for the homes will be allocated to those living in the region, he added.

Mr. Hiyasat described his corporation as currently conducting a survey in order to estimate the actual number of housing units required to meet the needs of limited income groups for similar projects.

The corporation is currently building six housing projects comprising 895 housing units within the governorates of Karak, Ma'an, Zarqa, Mafraq and Aqaba.

Jordan Times facsimile
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Taleban make fresh gains; say Dostum cannot survive

KABUL (R) — Afghanistan's fundamentalist Islamic Taleban militia said its forces made fresh gains in opposition-held territory Tuesday and demanded that its foes surrender.

"(General Abdul Rashid) Dostum will soon drown in the people's anger, because the people are Mujahiddeen (strugglers) who have given sacrifices and want an Islamic government," said Taleban Information Minister Amir Khan Mutaqi.

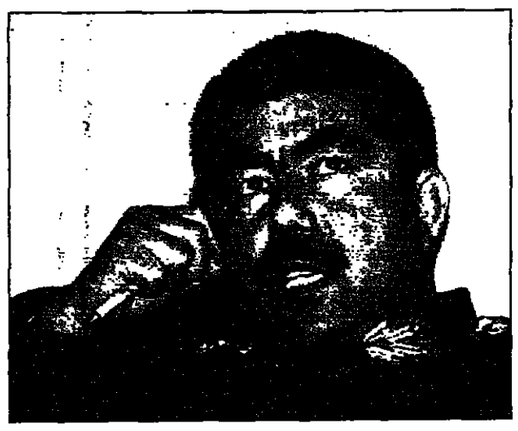
He was speaking a day after a key Dostum commander, General Abdul Malik, switched sides and launched a pro-Taleban revolt in at least four opposition-held northern provinces.

Gen. Dostum has been fighting the Taleban in a loose alliance with ousted government Commander Ahmad Shah Masood and a Shiite Muslim militia since the Taleban seized Kabul in September.

Prior to Gen. Malik's defection, the Taleban already controlled two-thirds of the country.

A Taleban official said earlier that the Taleban had captured the Shibar Pass in central Afghanistan that leads to the city of Bamiyan and commands a route to the north. But a spokesman for the Shiite Hezb-i-Wahdat group denied it fell.

Maulvi Wakil Ahmad, a Taleban official based in the southern city of Kandahar, said anti-Dostum forces had seized Kunduz and Sar-i-Pul, the capitals of Kunduz and Jowzjan provinces.



General Abdul Rashid Dostum

No independent confirmation was available.

Gen. Malik, governor of Faryab province, is the brother of Rasul Pahlivan, a senior Dostum commander assassinated last year.

The Taleban's supreme leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, told all opposition leaders to stop fighting or face Islamic justice.

"All those fighting the Taleban should surrender immediately," Mr. Omar said in a statement from his Kandahar headquarters. "Those who surrender voluntarily face no threat and their lives and property will be protected.

"Those who are forced to surrender by the Taleban will face Islamic courts," the statement, carried by the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) Service, said.

Mr. Omar said Gen. Dostum, an ethnic Uzbek, and former government military chief Ahmad Shah Masood, an ethnic Tajik, should "cease further bloodshed in Afghanistan and stop fooling the people."

"They must give themselves up to the Islamic (Taleban) government. If they continue spilling blood and wasting public funds, there will be a decision against them in an Islamic court," the Taleban leader declared.

He told neighbouring countries to keep out of Afghanistan's internal affairs "at this sensitive time" or take responsibility for what he called "the dangerous consequences."

The Taleban have in the past accused Russia, Iran and Uzbekistan of aiding their opponents, who say the Taleban enjoy the backing of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United States.

A Taleban spokesman said the Islamic militia was advancing towards Faryab, but gave no details.

An opposition leader, Dr. Abdullah, said talks were under way to keep Gen. Malik in the opposition alliance. "We are trying to solve the problem between Malik and Dostum," he said.

AIP said Monday Gen. Dostum seemed to have kept control of his stronghold Mazar-i-Sharif, 300 kilometres northwest of Kabul, but there has been no word on his whereabouts.

Independent sources confirmed a report that Gen. Malik had captured former Herat provincial Governor Ismail Khan, who had been fighting the Taleban in northwestern Afghanistan. It was not clear if Mr. Khan would be handed to the Taleban, who forced him to flee from Herat to neighbouring Iran in September 1995.

Mr. Mutaqi said the uprising against Gen. Dostum was part of a plan involving ordinary people in the north and Mujahiddin Islamic guerrillas who had fought the former Soviet army in the 1980s.

"It indicates that different tribes and nationalities support the Islamic (Taleban) government," he said.

Taleban leaders, who are mainly from the ethnic Pashtun group, deny accusations that they want to impose Pashtun hegemony on Afghanistan, saying they are a pan-Afghan movement.

A fire brigade personnel removes a dead body from a cyclone-hit house in Bangladesh's Chittagong Port city Tuesday (Reuter photo)

Bangladesh counts cost of killer cyclone

CHITTAGONG, Bangladesh (AFP) — Hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshis returned to their villages Tuesday to find their homes swept away or devastated by the cyclone that claimed dozens of lives.

The death toll rose Tuesday to 27 with officials predicting it would reach nearer 100. But there was widespread relief that Monday's storm, which badly scarred the southeast coast, came nowhere near the 139,000 death toll from a cyclone six years ago.

The prime minister's office said there were 17 deaths in the port of Chittagong, six on the island of Maheshkhali, and four around Cox's Bazar, bordering Burma.

Whole towns and villages which emptied as inhabitants fled to the 365 concrete cyclone shelters built after the 1991 tragedy, started returning to their homes to find they were not there, or unrecognisable.

More than one million people were evacuted from 50 offshore islands and coastal districts before the cyclone struck, the government said.

Most of the tens of thousands left homeless were in shanties made of mud and bamboo that stood no chance against the winds of up to 230 kilometres an hour.

Labour Minister Abdul Mannan made an international appeal from Chittagong for international help to rebuild thousands of houses and other buildings and infrastructure.

"We need assistance in terms of house building materials and dry food," he told AFP.

The minister said an estimated 2.5 million people were affected by the cyclone but was unable to give the number made homeless as the clearup operation had barely started.

Mr. Mannan said the army has been called in to assist in the rescue and relief effort and treat the injured. The Red Crescent has its own army of 33,000 trained volunteers working along the coast.

Indian newspapers quoted official sources in Dhaka as saying at least 500 were dead and several hundred missing, but Mr. Mannan said the toll would probably not exceed 100.

Mr. Mannan said, however, there were a large number of injured in areas where tens of thousands of homes had been flattened, crops destroyed and power and communications cut.

Red Crescent official Obaidul Huq said in Dhaka the death toll might go up but ruled out a huge casualty figure. He said radio contact had been established with most of the coastal districts and islands which bore the brunt of the storm.

Mr. Huq said casualties were low because the storm hit during the daytime and there was not the same kind of flooding so people had time to take shelter.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed arrived in Chittagong Tuesday and flew over the battered coastal areas to see the extent of damage, official sources said.

The fishing town of Teknaf, Shitakundu, Banshkhali and Anwara, and the islands Maheshkhali, Sandwip and St. Martins were the worst affected, officials said.

In Chittagong, a giant crane in the port collapsed and a ship broke anchor during the storm, officials said, but a clearup was underway.

"Many people even went back late Monday after the storm and rains subsided," a Red Crescent official in Dhaka said, adding the rest have left the shelters early Tuesday.

Police cleared the streets of fallen trees and debris overnight and many offices and markets reopened Tuesday.

China hails White House decision to extend MFN, warns Congress

BEIJING (AFP) — China Tuesday hailed U.S. President Bill Clinton's decision to extend most-favoured-nation (MFN) trading status for another year and warned Congress not to shoot U.S. interests in the foot.

"We welcome the decision of President Bill Clinton to extend MFN," Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang told a regular media briefing, adding that Mr. Clinton had shown foresight. He called on the United States to go one step further by granting China permanent MFN status — and end what has become a divisive annual debate for bilateral relations.

MFN status, according China low tariffs enjoyed by most other nations exporting to the United States, was "a normal arrangement in the interests of both countries" and the basis of the trade relationship, he said. "It is deleterious to long-term and stable sino-us trade relations for the U.S. government to discuss this issue anew each year," the spokesman said.

"We hope the U.S. government will be able to take active measures to resolve completely the problem."

The White House decision, announced Monday, has set the stage for what is expected to be a battle in Congress, which has 90 days to consider blocking the extension. Legislators have used the annual renewal debate to attack Beijing and White House China policy in recent years.

China's human rights record, weapons exports and ballooning trade surplus with the United States are expected to season this year's discussions.

But Mr. Shen said members of Congress must understand that the interests of both countries are at stake.

"We think that even without MFN, we would continue to develop our trade relations with other countries. Sino-U.S. trade would suffer," he warned.

A denial of MFN status would lump China in the United States' "pariah" category with North Korea, Cuba, Libya, Iran, Iraq and Vietnam.

The White House must lobby hard this year, with China's critics louder and its supporters quieter than usual as a result of charges that Beijing sought to sway the 1996 U.S. election by making illicit campaign donations.

Some members of Congress — including House Speaker Newt Gingrich — have proposed renewing MFN for less than the usual 12-month period, arguing that would give Washington more leverage if Beijing proved heavy-handed after retaking control of Hong Kong on July 1.

But Mr. Shen called the proposal "unacceptable," saying that Hong Kong was a bilateral issue between China and Britain and utterly unrelated to MFN.

Hong Kong's governor, Chris Patten, and its leading China critic, Martin Lee, have both urged Washington to renew the favourable tariff rates as usual on grounds that revoking them would severely damage the territory. While White House officials believe they have enough Senate votes to block any bid to strip MFN from China, they fear their opponents will use a floor debate to attack China and U.S. China policy — and damage bilateral ties in the process.

The diplomatic stakes are high, as Sino-U.S. relations have seen steady improvement in the last six months after years of ups and downs.

Chinese President Jiang Zemin is due to pay a landmark first state visit to Washington later this year, to be reciprocated by Mr. Clinton early in 1998.

But a growing trade deficit will tempt some on Capitol Hill to use MFN as a trade sanction.

In a study sure to fuel anti-China sentiment, two Federal Reserve economists reported Monday that the 1996 U.S. trade deficit with China of nearly $40 billion would widen in the coming years. According to Beijing's figures, the gap was only $10.53 billion last year.

The U.S. business community strongly opposes any cancellation of MFN, and Mr. Shen's warning of enhanced trade with other countries will ring strongly in the ears of Seattle-based aircraft maker Boeing — stung by China's purchase of $1.5 billion of European-made Airbus planes last week.

Indonesian police teargas brawling demonstrators

JAKARTA (R) — Police fired teargas to break up confrontations between Indonesian political groups in renewed election campaign violence in Jakarta Tuesday, witnesses said.

The police, backed by troops, broke up a street battle in the Otista area of eastern Jakarta between supporters of the ruling Golkar and its main rival, the minority Muslim-oriented United Development Party (PPP). The groups were armed with knives and machetes.

Police also fired teargas to disperse crowds in the Warung Buncit area in the south of the city of 10 million people, witnesses said.

There were no immediate reports of injuries or arrests.

The violence flared despite a decision by PPP leaders not to campaign in Jakarta Tuesday after street battles between its supporters and Golkar rivals last weekend.

The leaders of the PPP, Golkar and the Christian-Nationalist Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) said Sunday night they were calling off mass rallies until the end of the election campaign Friday to avert further violence.

The three parties are the only groups legally entitled to contest the May 29 general elections for 425 elected seats in the 500-member house of representatives. The other 75 seats are allotted to the military which does not vote.

The main campaign violence has been in Central and West Java between backers of the PPP and Golkar, which is expected to win the election comfortably. There is a five-day cooling off period between the end of the campaign and the actual poll.

Witnesses said about 200 supporters of the PPP fought Golkar loyalists in the Otista area as thousands of onlookers gathered. But police, troops and Marines with riot gear moved in and pushed the crowds back into residential side-streets off the main thoroughfare.

Political analysts said the security forces had shown restraint in dealing with the violence.

Before the campaign, leaders of the three parties had agreed to campaign in separate areas each day to avoid confrontations. Tuesday was the PPP's campaign day in Java, the country's most crowded island with 60 per cent of Indonesia's 200 million people.

Analysts said the PPP hoped to do well in the Jakarta area, but the violence could be counter-productive.

"A lot of the PPP are very young, and they are frightening people who might otherwise be sympathetic to the party," one diplomat said.

Future H. Kong government's choice of judge praised

HONG KONG (AFP) — Hong Kong's future leader Tuesday named a British-educated lawyer, Andrew Li, to be the territory's top judge after the handover, in a move hailed on all sides as a boost for the independence of the judiciary under Chinese rule.

Mr. Li, 48, will be chief justice of the Court of Final Appeal, which will replace Britain's Privy Council as the final arbiter on legal questions when Hong Kong reverts to Chinese rule on July 1.

Hong Kong's designated chief executive, Tung Chee-Hwa, said he was appointing Mr. Li because he was "an outstanding lawyer with exceptional personal qualities who is very highly regarded in the legal and judicial circles."

"(...) An independent judiciary has been and will remain the cornerstone of Hong Kong's stability and prosperity," Mr. Tung said.

"The people of Hong Kong have high expectations of the judiciary in upholding the rule of law, ensuring the fair and efficient administration of justice and safeguarding the freedoms of the individual."

In a statement from Britain, where he is on a visit, Governor Chris Patten said he "wholeheartedly" welcomed the appointment.

"This is excellent news and will be greeted with real enthusiasm by the legal profession, by the community and by all those who know him in other countries," Mr. Patten said.

He added that Mr. Li had made an "invaluable contribution" to the Executive Council, a body of advisors to the governor, and had a long record of public service.

Acting Chief Justice Noel Power offered his "warmest congratulations" to Mr. Li and said the appointment "is noted with great pleasure by all in the judiciary." "A smooth transition of the judiciary is of fundamental importance for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region," it said, referring to Hong Kong's post-handover status under Chinese sovereignty.

"All members of the judiciary will give unstinting support to the new chief justice when he assumes office on July 1, 1997," Chief Justice Power said.

Deputy governor Anson Chan added: "Mr. Li is a very distinguished member of the Hong Kong bar who has an outstanding record of public service. I have every confidence that he will be a first-class chief justice."

Hong Kong's judicial system is seen as a pillar of the territory's success, equal to freedom of the press and the neutrality of the civil service in importance.

It is generally praised for handing down fair and quick judgements, underpinning rule of law and ensuring a level playing field for commerce.

Critics of China's approach towards Hong Kong have worried that Beijing could interfere with the judiciary, in particularly by pressuring Mr. Tung to name compliant judges.

The recommendation of Mr. Li was made by the Judicial Officers Recommendation Commission (designate), a panel set up under the basic law, Hong Kong's post-handover mini-constitution, to advise the chief executive on judicial appointments.

Mr. Li's appointment will be put to the Provisional Legislature, the China-appointed interim law-making body for Hong Kong, for endorsement this Saturday, Mr. Tung said in a statement.

The future Hong Kong leader was at pains to stress that he had not interfered at all with the panel's work.

The commission "had discharged its first task in an independent, conscientious and methodical manner," the statement quoted a Tung spokesman as saying.

"The fact that that (panel) was left to get on with the job in the way it thought best was the clearest indication of the respect for and determination to uphold the independence and the rule of law in Hong Kong," it said.

It added that the commission had considered 140 people for the top job, including serving justices of appeal, serving high court judges and veteran barristers, and taken soundings from senior members of the judiciary and legal professions.

"The final recommendation was unanimous," it said.

Mr. Li had a top-rate education at St. Paul's Coeducational College in Hong Kong followed by two master's degrees, in arts and law, from Cambridge University in Britain.

He was called to the British bar in 1970, moved to Hong Kong three years later and was appointed a barrister in 1988. He is a steward of the Hong Kong Jockey Club, a position at the top of Hong Kong's social world.

British government fairer than Chinese — Hong Kong poll

HONG KONG (AFP) — Hong Kong people expect the territory's post-handover government will be less fair, less efficient, less open and more corrupt, according to a poll published Tuesday.

However respondents in general expect the economy and the business community to fair at least as well as under British rule when China takes over, the poll conducted by the Hong Kong Chinese University showed.

A total of 19.1 per cent of respondents felt life would be "better" after the handover, compared to 15 per cent who thought it would be worse.

Seventy-five per cent felt China would stand by its promises for Hong Kong's future, up from 67.6 per cent in 1996. The promises include a high degree of autonomy.

U.N. expresses concern over rights of Serbs in Croatia

ZAGREB (AFP) — U.N. special rapporteur on human rights Elisabeth Rehn Tuesday expressed her "grave concern" over rights abuses against Serbs in Croatia and difficulties over the peaceful reintegration of returning Serb refugees.

In a letter to Foreign Minister Mate Granic, Ms. Rehn referred to incidents last week during which Serb refugees returning to villages near Hrvatska Kostanjic, 80 kilometres southeast of Zagreb, were beaten up and expelled by Croat refugees there.

The Serbs were returning from Eastern Slavonia to reclaim houses in the villages now occupied by Croats, who settled there after being thrown out of Bosnia by Serbs in 1992.

Ms. Rehn called on Croatian authorities to make the return of Serb refugees a priority in order to avoid "a tragedy for the peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia."

She said the incidents "reflect a laxity in resolving the general issue of return, both of refugees and (displaced persons) in Croatia."

Eastern Slavonia, the last Serb-held area of Croatia, is due to return to Zagreb's control by January.

Some 180,000 Serbs fled the so-called Serb Krajina Republic — which was declared by Serb separatists on an area of Croatian territory in 1991 — when the area was reclaimed by the Croatian army in 1995.

Most of them — around 120,000 — took refuge in Eastern Slavonia, while others headed to Serb areas in Bosnia and to Serbia.

Serbs in Eastern Slavonia have made the return of some 100,000 Croats kicked out of the region in 1991 conditional on the right of Serbs to return to the area of the old Krajina Republic.

Meanwhile, the Croatian press reported Tuesday that the government had written to Ms. Rehn to accuse Serbs in Eastern Slavonia of looting the region on a massive scale ahead of their departure.

"Serbs who do not want to remain in Croatia after the reintegration of (Eastern Slavonia) are looting Croat houses on a large scale," Croatian Deputy Prime Minister Ljerka Mintas-Hodak said in a letter to Ms. Rehn.

U.S. Air Force seen going ahead with adultery trial

MINOT, North Dakota (R) — A senior air force official said Monday it was unlikely a female pilot scheduled to be court-martialed on adultery charges will get an honourable discharge, but her lawyer was optimistic her trial will be delayed while her resignation bid is considered.

"It is going to be very, very unlikely that the secretary will allow an honourable discharge," the official in Washington told Reuters when asked if 1st Lt. Kelly Flinn's request would be granted.

Lt. Flinn, the air force's first female B-52 pilot, is seeking to resign with an honourable discharge to avoid court-martial on adultery and other charges. The trial was scheduled to begin Tuesday at the base.

Her civilian lawyer Frank Spinner told a news conference shortly after he submitted her request for an honourable discharge to Minot Air Force Base officials that he was "optimistic ... that the judge will grant us some time."

"It is going to be very, very unlikely that the secretary will allow an honourable discharge," the air force official told Reuters in Washington when asked if Lt. Flinn's request for the honourable discharge would be granted.

But the official, who asked not to be identified, said the air force judge advocate general's office at the Pentagon was likely to grant a delay in the court-martial Tuesday morning, pending a decision by Widnall on Flinn's request.

Spinner said "the whole point of Lt. Flinn offering this resignation is to avoid a trial, to avoid the embarrassment that we believe it will bring on the air force as well as further embarrassment it will cause her."

He also said he was seeking to delay the trial until June 2 to gain more time to prepare for the court-martial.

Lt. Flinn's lawyers submitted the resignation request — a thick, bound document that Mr. Spinner showed to reporters — to the office of Col. Robert elder, the 5th Bomb Wing commander at Minot Air Force Base. Her lawyers confirmed that they had sent another copy via overnight mail to Widnall in Washington.

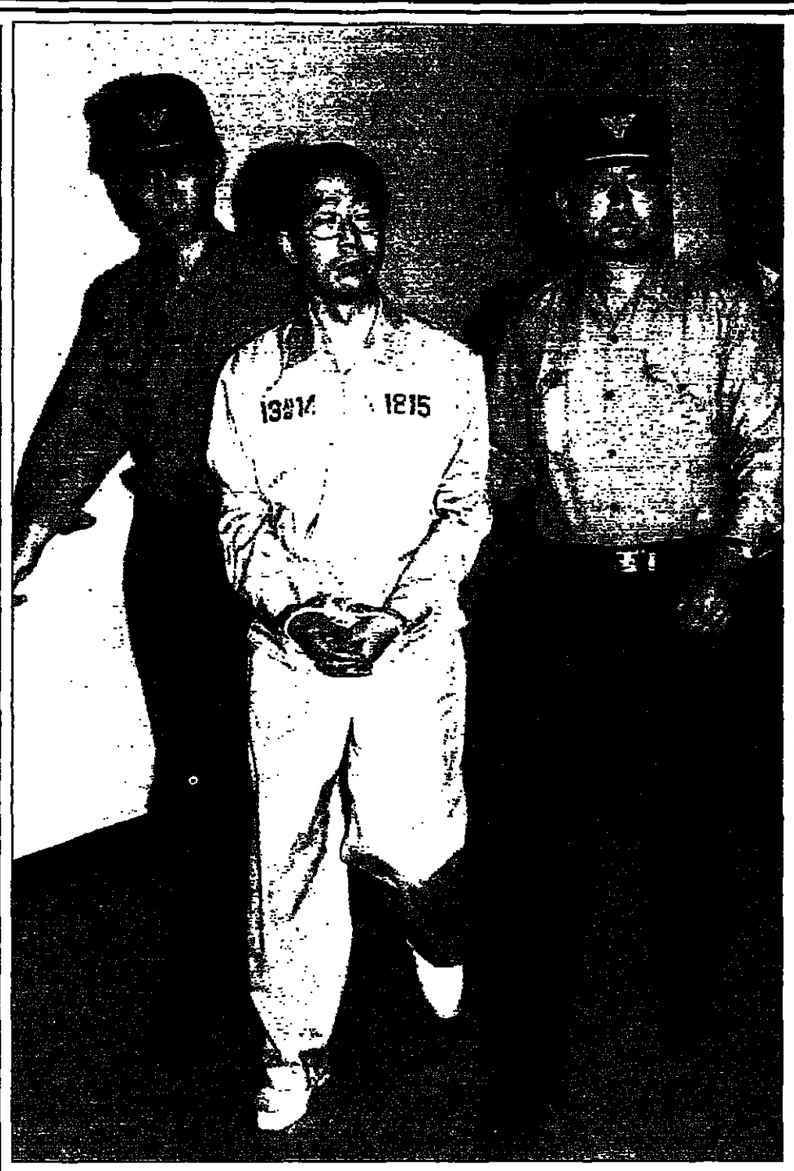
Mr. Spinner said the document argued that an honourable discharge would not be an unreasonable outcome to Lt. Flinn's case. He said he had identified "numerous cases" in which air force members in similar circumstances had been allowed to remain on active duty.

"Our position is that it is not rare for someone who is charged with adultery even to remain on active duty or to receive an honourable discharge," Mr. Spinner said. "This is not precedent-setting if Lt. Flinn receives an honourable discharge."

Lt. Flinn, 26 and single, has acknowledged having had an affair with a married civilian and was also accused of having sex with a lower-ranking enlisted man. She also faced several other military charges, including being accused of lying.

Mr. Spinner acknowledged there was a possibility that the judge in the case, Col. Dennis Kansala, would deny the delay and that the trial would go forward.

"One option would be to process the resignation request and (for) the trial to go forward. Even if there's a conviction, the secretary could still approve the request and that would eliminate the conviction," Mr. Spinner said.



South Korean President Kim Young-Sam's second son Kim Hyun-Chul, wearing a prison uniform, is escorted to the Supreme Public Prosecution Office Tuesday. Kim Hyun-chul was arrested Saturday as a suspect for bribery and influence-pedding (Reuter photo)

S. Korean leader's son questioned again

SEOUL (AFP) — The second son of President Kim Young-Sam was summoned from his prison cell Tuesday for further questioning by prosecutors, who seized 150 bank accounts holding some $7.8 million of his slush money.

Kim Hyun-Chul, was shown on television, handcuffed and bound, being escorted by two investigators, each holding an arm, into the 11th floor questioning room of the prosecutor general's office.

It was the first time the son has appeared in public since his arrest three days ago.

Wearing light blue prison garb with the number 1815 stencilled on the chest, Hyun-Chul, 38, looked grim and pale. Prison guards said he had passed a sleepless night.

Head lowered and eyes downcast before television lights, the slight, bespectacled Hyun-Chul ignored shouted questions from journalists as he quickened his pace toward the questioning room.

Prosecutors said they had taken out a court warrant to seize and search 150 banks accounts opened at 10 banks by Hyun-Chul and a former intelligence agency official, Kim Ki-Sup, to trace the flow of the $7.8 million.

The $7.8 million was allegedly managed by Kim Ki-Sup, who was arrested Monday on charges of influence peddling.

Hyun-Chul is imprisoned in the Seoul Detention House, where former President Roh Tae-Woo is also behind bars for corruption and his role in a 1979 military coup, now condemned as a military rebellion.

The son was charged with taking 3.22 billion won ($3.6 million) in return for favours from two business firms — Dooyang Group and Daeho Construction Co. He was also charged with evading tax worth $1.5 million by laundering 3.33 billion won ($3.7 million) he had received from business firms as cash gifts.

Prosecutors said Tuesday Hyun-Chul had collected a total of 6.55 billion won ($7.1 million) from six businessmen, including regular fixed monthly payments from five of them, since his father took office in early 1993.

At one time he was collecting as much as 170 million won in regular monthly payments from the five, the prosecutors said.

Hyun-Chul is suspected of still holding some 10 billion won of slush money.

Much of the money is believed to be funds left over from the 1992 elections which brought Kim Young-Sam to powef.

The controversy over Hyun-Chul's alleged misconduct came to light after a massive loans-for-kickbacks scandal involving the Hanbo Business Group which collapsed in January, revealing a chain of sordid high-level corruption.

The prosecution has cleared him of his involvement in the scandal.

Prosecutors also said they would indict, but not physically arrest, eight of 33 politicians who were on the list of beneficiaries of money from Hanbo — a practice here reserved for minor offenders.

Brazil jail inmates free hostages

RIO DE JANEIRO (AFP) — Inmates in a prison in the southeastern state of Sao Paulo released 500 hostages Monday, ending a tense 26-hour standoff with police and returning control of the jail to authorities.

An undetermined number of inmates had taken some 500 visitors and prison guards hostage when they took over a cellblock during visiting hours Sunday, closed the doors and announced that no one would enter or leave without their authorisation.

Five guards were the first to walk out of the prison at 5 p.m. (2000 GMT), while the remaining hostages were released in waves over two hours, military police told AFP.

The inmates — whose fate was not yet known — released their captives after state prison chief Lourival Gomes promised to investigate eight guards inmates accused of mistreating them.

The inmates late Sunday freed 110 women and children after prison director Mauricio Guarnieri was allowed to enter the cellblock where the rebellion occurred, leaving an estimated 205 hostages still inside.

Police cordoned off the prison, electricity was cut to the rebel cellblock and authorities could not telephone the inmates, a prison spokeswoman said earlier Monday, asking not to be named.

The hostage-takers reportedly demanded that some of the inmates and prison administrators be transferred to other jails.

A military police official told AFP that the situation was calm and that the inmates had not broken nor burned anything in the prison, which houses some 760 convicts while it was designed to hold only 550.

Overpopulation and horrendous prison conditions have sparked regular uprisings in Brazil's prisons. There were 42 in the state of Sao Paulo alone this year, according to the State Security Secretariat.

On Sunday alone, there was another prison uprising in Taubate, also in Sao Paulo, and in Vila Velha, the state of Espiritu Santo.

Support for Australian premier slides

SYDNEY (AFP) — Support for Australian Prime Minister John Howard has slid to a new low, according to a survey released Tuesday amid persistent criticism of his handling of a mounting race debate.

Support for anti-immigration MP Pauline Hanson, who has warned Australia risks being "swamped" by Asians, has levelled off at about nine per cent, according to the poll published in the Australian newspaper.

The prime minister's approval rating slumped to 37 per cent in the survey taken after last week's federal budget, down from 67 per cent a year ago.

The poll showed the conservative government's second budget did nothing to halt the drop-off, with 35 per cent of respondents saying they would be worse off, compared to 11 per cent who believed they would benefit.

An Asian community lobby group stepped up criticism of Mr. Howard and his senior ministers in the ruling coalition, saying they should openly condemn racists.

The Queensland Chinese community voice, which claims membership of more than 30,000, said in a statement Mr. Howard should be more outspoken in his condemnation of Ms. Hanson.

Gerry Adams seeks talks pledge in discussions with U.K. government

BELFAST (AFP) — Sinn Fein wants the British government to state with "absolute clarity" that it would be brought into negotiations on the future of Northern Ireland immediately following an IRA ceasefire, Gerry Adams said in an interview published Tuesday.

In his first detailed response to British Prime Minister Tony Blair's offer in Belfast last Friday of talks with government officials, Mr. Adams said meaningful and inclusive negotiations were essential for progress.

The Sinn Fein president, speaking to the Belfast-based Irish News, said if clear assurances were given that a viable and credible negotiations process would be put in place, then the peace process could be restored.

Mr. Adams signalled his belief that "a restoration by the IRA of its cessation of August 1994 will be genuinely unequivocal, containing a clear and unambiguous commitment to enhance a genuine peace process."

Mr. Adams went further: "Sinn Fein believes that an unequivocal restoration of the IRA cessation would represent the most important confidence building initiative on the IRA's part."

It was noted that Mr. Adams had adopted the language of the government in the use of the word "unequivocal" when talking about a ceasefire.

Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams and deputy leader Martin McGuinness (right) speak to a police officer (left) upon arrival at the Houses of Parliament (Reuter photo)

Within the next few days Sinn Fein leaders are expected to sit down in talks with British government officials and ask for clarification of confidence-building measures, the removal of preconditions, a time frame for the negotiations and the timing of the party's entry to the negotiations.

Mr. Blair made it clear in his Belfast speech last week that the meeting he was offering Sinn Fein with officials was not any form of negotiation.

He said the "settlement train" was leaving, he wanted Sinn Fein on board and he was prepared to authorise a meeting to discover if they were committed to democratic negotiation in the place of violence.

The British and Irish governments should now indicate how the obstacle of decommissioning paramilitary arms was to be removed so that the issue could be properly addressed without blocking the negotiations, Mr. Adams said.

"The removal of the gun from the political equation in Ireland is a clear objective of a lasting peace settlement. Sinn Fein is totally committed to resolving all issues through negotiations, including the issue of disarmament, decommissioning and demilitarisation," he said.

U.K. Labour MP accused of bribery admits he gave a 'loan'

LONDON (AFP) — A Labour MP accused of bribing a rival to fight a losing campaign in the general election this month has admitted he gave money to a rival candidate but insisted it was a loan, the BBC reported Tuesday.

Mohammad Sarwar, the first Muslim in the British Parliament, also told party officials that the money was handed over after the election was completed, the BBC added.

Senior Labour sources however refused to comment on the report. They say the matter is already in the hands of the police and officials.

The Pakistan-born Sarwar, a retail food millionaire in Scotland, has said he would sue the Sunday tabloid News Of The World for publishing the "totally false" allegations last weekend that he tried to bribe a political opponent to soft-pedal his election campaign.

Scottish Secretary Donald Dewar has ordered a police investigation into the paper's allegations that Mr. Sarwar had paid £5,000 ($8,000) cash to Islam Badar to fight a losing campaign.

Mr. Sarwar later said that he, himself, had requested such an investigation, "and I welcome the move."

He declined comment "until the police investigation is completed."

Subsequently, another candidate for the Glasgow seat Mr. Sarwar won, Peter Paton, filed a police complaint alleging a Sarwar campaign worker proposed a unspecified donation to his campaign, but that no money changed hands.

A third candidate for the seat, Jamil Abbassi, alleged he had refused an offer from Sarwar supporters of £50,000 ($80,000) to pull out of the race entirely.

The allegations, if confirmed, would pose an acid test of Labour Party's resolve in dealing with the same type of "sleaze" for which, in opposition, it had systematically attacked the previous Tory government.

Bailiffs start to evict protesters against Manchester Airport second runway

MANCHESTER, Britain (AFP) — Bailiffs moved in at dawn Tuesday to evict protesters campaigning against Manchester Airport's planned second runway.

A spokesman for the 100 or so protesters, who retreated to their tunnels and tree-top camps in readiness for the raid, said bailiffs arrived at one of the camps at about 0400 a.m. (0300 GMT).

One man claimed he was beaten with a truncheon.

The group was given its final warning to leave the site on the Bollin Valley, near Styal, Cheshire, northern England, last week when a writ was served.

The under-sheriff of Cheshire, Randall Hibbert, visited the campaigners' camps to serve the writs last week.

The final legal obstacle to prevent bailiffs starting the evictions from the 172 million development had been removed when the protesters lost a last-ditch legal battle for a stay of eviction.

Within an hour-and-a-half, about 15 protesters who had been cleared from their camps gathered by the roadside.

They said they had been moved by men wearing black with balaclavas and carrying truncheons.

Protesters, who have stocks of food to last up to two months, predict the authorities will find it far harder to gain control of the site than at the A30 by-pass protest in Devon, southwest of England, last year.

The under-sheriff, who is responsible for the eviction, held talks with police, the airport and developers over the action to be taken.

At safety meetings to discuss the evictions, it is understood the use of hydraulic platforms to remove tree-dwellers was ruled out because of the danger to protesters occupying the tunnels.

One of the tunnels was excavated by anti-roads campaigner Daniel Hooper, Alias Swampy, who became famous after staying several days under siege in a tunnel he dug at the a30 by-pass. He is now under a bail order banning him from going within five miles of the airport site.

Juppe says left alliance will lead to 'muddle' over Europe

PARIS (AFP) — French Prime Minister Alain Juppe said Tuesday that a win for the left-wing alliance in upcoming elections leading to cohabitation with right-wing President Jacques Chirac would cause a "muddle" over Europe.

Mr. Juppe said that the Socialist Party and the Communist Party, who set aside their differences last month and agreed to fight the election together, were "not in agreement" on European policy.

"Throughout the entire legislature ... I have heard Communist deputies calling for abrogation of the Maastricht Treaty during questions to the National Assembly," he said on RTL Television. "How could they govern with the (Socialists)?"

He also described the Socialists' economic policy as "extra spending and extra deficits which would immediately put us beyond the scope of economic and monetary union."

"We have set conditions for the euro to succeed. (Socialist Party leader) Lionel Jospin has set conditions for the euro to fail," he said.

He described cohabitation as "not a good system" and a "last resort" and questioned whether a left-wing alliance would "show as much good will" towards Mr. Chirac as he said the ruling right-wing coalitions of 1986-1988 and 1993-95 did towards Socialist President Francois Mitterrand.

On his own future, the unpopular Juppe repeated that the choice of prime minister was up to Mr. Chirac.

He said he "willingly" understood popular discontent but that it was up to each voter "to weigh up the pros and the cons in his soul and his conscience."

Meanwhile, French opposition leader Lionel Jospin predicted no trouble between his Socialist Party and its Communist and Greens allies should the leftwing coalition win elections.

"If we win, the rule of democracy will come into play naturally," he said in an interview with AFP Monday. "Either we agree — but very very quickly — on the few points that remain to be cleared up, or the policy enforced will be that of the main partner in the new majority."

"I am optimistic," Mr. Jospin added.

Longtime rivals turned reluctant bed-fellows, the two parties set aside their differences last month and agreed to fight the election together.

But the seven-page declaration of political principles adopted by the two ahead of the vote left much unsaid, notably as regards deadlines for European Monetary Union and integration, a subject on which the Communists take a tougher anti-Maastricht stand than the Socialists.

Polls last weekend tipped a narrow victory for the ruling centre-right coalition in the two-round vote for the 577-seat National Assembly, but with a greatly reduced majority of seats.

The Socialists on the other hand can expect to win over 200 seats, a vast increase from their current 63, while the Communists stand to hover around their current 24 deputies.

Only last week, cracks appeared in the fragile entente between the two, with Communist Party chief Robert Hue accusing his Socialist allies of being power-hungry.

Denouncing Socialist "hegemonism," he reminded his friends that "the Socialist Party cannot secure a majority in the National Assembly on its own."

And in statements that could seriously damage the standing of the Socialist camp, Mr. Hue played up his reticence over European integration while demanding extra measures that would incur increased government spending.

The April 29 accord between the two skirted the Communists' opposition to European integration, speaking only of going "beyond the Treaty of Maastricht" and "redirecting European construction towards a social Europe."

The declaration vowed too that the left would make job creation "an absolute priority", creating 700,000 jobs for young people and reducing the working week to 35 hours while maintaining salary levels.

The job-creation pledge is the central plank of the Socialist campaign and Mr. Jospin has said he would set "reasonable" conditions to criteria for monetary union.

The Socialist Party leader also voiced optimism over the prospects of a leftwing win in the election.

Jordan Times

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For now, restore confidence

ACCORDING TO the newly-amended Press and Publications Law, Jordanian newspapers would be found in violation if they "reported, commented, analysed, printed photos or cartoons" on what happened yesterday when the police used force to disperse a group of journalists who staged a peaceful protest in front of the prime minister's office.

Whether the government elects to prosecute those newspapers for doing their job, and on what count (the extent of describing the force used, commenting on how unnecessary or brutal it was, and editorialising against it) is yet to be seen. What we know for certain, however, is that no matter what the government does, it will not be able to repair the damage that will have been done to this country's image abroad, nor will it manage to contain the outpour of negative reactions by the international media over this incident, and the new law itself, nor will it in fact restore the confidence of our people in the democracy that was shaken by the introduction of the amendments.

While there is some understanding of, even sympathy with, the reasons that led to the decision to amend the law, the fact remains that there were better reasons for not amending it. Not least among these is the inevitability of further eroding the credibility of our national media in the eyes of our own people, forcing them in the process to rely instead on foreign sources of information about ourselves and our society in the new age of advanced information technologies, and giving up hope in building democratic and civil society structures while they are still on the drawing board. Amending the law, especially in the way it was done, has been tantamount to blaming the press for problems that our economy faces, for divisions in the Arab World and here at home, and for the faltering Arab-Israeli peace process. Some, maybe even most tabloids, may have violated "ethical standards," insulted public figures or simply broke the law. But does that mean that all newspapers, journalists and freedoms have to be punished and curtailed, through the force of a Draconian law?

While we do recognise the fears, misgivings and tribulations of those who are worried by wrong and unethical journalistic practices, we do not think that the solution lies in cracking down on journalism and journalists and curbing freedom of expression. We, of course, differentiate between freedom of the press and inciting violence, threatening national unity and slandering people. Such violations should not be tolerated or condoned. But these are cases for the courts and just because we could not solve all of them it does not imply that there has not been a positive outcome overall since 1989.

Freedom of expression, the government must realise, is not only a coordinate of democracy. It is a prerequisite for it. In the absence of a free press nobody will believe that there are going to be free elections, clean water and true accountability by the government.

With this in mind, the government should act now to restore confidence with the journalistic body by freezing the amended law until such time when Parliament has been able to review it. In the interim, the journalists themselves as well as newspaper owners will have had time to absorb the seriousness of the situation and acted on their own to correct shortcomings in their practice of the profession.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I Arabic daily on Tuesday decried the ongoing Turkish incursion into northern Iraq and urged Arab states to unite and fend off this danger posed to Iraq and the Arab Nation at large. Regardless of the motives and reasons behind the recent aggression on Iraqi territory, it can by no means be condoned and it should be strongly condemned, said the paper. The Turks have justified their incursion by claiming that they are trying to stem attacks on their territory of Kurdish rebels, but they totally ignored the international law through their occupation of parts of the Iraqi territory under the pretext of fighting the rebels, said the daily. The repeated Turkish acts of aggression on Iraq can only strain Arab-Turkish relations and can have very serious consequences on the future ties between the close neighbours, warned the daily. The paper said that the Turks have been encouraged to launch their attack on Iraq in view of the present disarray in Arab countries' ranks and the absence of solidarity with the Iraqi nation, something which, the paper said, must end and should be replaced by a united Arab front to fend off aggression.

INSTEAD OF introducing a harsh amendment to the Press and Publications Law, which is designed too kill most of the weekly papers, the government ought to have taken measures to address isolated cases of violations of the previous law by certain weekly tabloids, said Saleh Qallab, a writer for **Al Arab Al Yawm** Tuesday. The writer said that the danger in the amendments to the law does not lie in the text itself, but rather in what happens when the government tries to apply the law. By introducing the harsh amendments, the government has armed itself with a weapon not to protect the press but rather to cut off its lifeline, said the writer who accused the government of reverting to martial law practices which remind people of the dark Middle Ages when no democracy existed. The writer said that journalists fear that the government will now use the weapon any time and anywhere it finds fit and direct it against all Jordanian journalists and their profession.

Washington Watch

By Dr. James J. Zogby

'When the humanity of the Palestinians is established, the balance might be restored'

IN THE very early stages of the Madrid process, five Arab states offered an important confidence-building gesture to the Israeli government. Their offer: if Israel agreed to stop settlement construction, they would agree to suspend the secondary boycott against countries and companies doing business with Israel.

Then Secretary of State James Baker heralded the gesture and the peace effort took a giant step forward.

Looking at the record establishes that Israel has not lived up to its end of this bargain. In the five years since the Arabs made this confidence-building move, Israel has confiscated more Palestinian land and built more Jewish-only housing units than in any other previous five-year period of occupation.

Meanwhile, several Arab states even made gestures to end the primary boycott by opening Israeli trade offices and by inviting Israeli trade delegations to both multilateral and bilateral trade meetings. A Jewish friend commented that the lights of Tel Aviv at night are the clearest evidence of change. Huge electronic billboards advertising companies and products never before available in Israel, because of boycott restrictions, now dominate the Tel Aviv night sky.

I believe that it is time to reevaluable the Arab move. While the U.S. continues to oppose any remnants of the Arab boycott — using excessive language, calling it "repugnant" or "vile," to establish its case — clearly the Arabs have a right to demand an accounting from Israel and the U.S.

And since Israel settlement construction and new land confiscations continue, it might even be time for the Arab League to reinvigorate its stand on the boycott.

I was brought up to believe that the boycott was an Arab response to the massive injustices done to the Palestinians during the creation of the state of Israel. Let us recount what Israel did right after 1948:

— 6,500 dunums of Arab land were confiscated;

— at least 385 Palestinian villages were completely destroyed;

— tens of thousands of houses, stores, orchards and farmlands were simply taken over; and

— over 875,000 Arabs were made refugees and denied their rights.

The sad truth is that despite a good-faith effort to resolve some of these injustices through a staged peace process, the major tragedies that have befallen the Palestinian people have not only not been addressed but are now growing — with new tragedies and injustices added each day.

I do not favour the method of embargo. An honest and balanced peace process is to be preferred. But if the Arab World does not strengthen its position in this process and places its just and historic grievances on the negotiating table, I fear that the inequity in the current peace process will not be remedied and Palestinian grievances will not be resolved.

I propose taking a lesson from the U.S. Congress. In an effort to strengthen the U.S. case against Cuba and to enlist international support for its embargo, the Congress passed a controversial amendment last year entitled the "Cuba Liberty and Democratisation Solidarity Act." (The Act is better known as the "Helms-Burton Act" after its two sponsors, Senator Jesse Helms (Republican from North Carolina) and Dan Burton (Republican from Indiana). Although reviled by supporters of free trade and contested by our allies in the Americas and Europe, the act deserves to be examined for its practical applications.

Under the heading: "Protection of Property Rights of United States Nationals" the act establishes that:

The Congress makes the following findings:

1. Individuals enjoy a fundamental right to own and enjoy property...

2. The wrongful confiscation or taking of property... by the Cuban government, and the subsequent exploitation of this property at the expense of the rightful owner, undermines the comity of nations, the free flow of commerce, and economic development.

3. Since Fidel Castro seized power in Cuba... he has confiscated the property of:

I. millions of his own citizens;

II. thousands of United States nationals; and

III. thousands more Cubans who claimed asylum in the United States as refugees...

4. The Cuban government is offering foreign investors... (opportunities) using property and assets some of which were confiscated...

5. This "trafficking" in confiscated property provides badly needed financial benefit, including hard currency, oil and productive investment and expertise, to the current Cuban government and thus undermines the foreign policy of the United States...

6. The international judicial system, as currently structured, lacks fully effective remedies for the wrongful confiscation of property and for unjust enrichment from the use of wrongfully confiscated property by governments and private entities at the expense of the rightful owners of the property.

7. International law recognises that a nation has the ability to provide for rules of law with respect to conduct outside territory that has or is intended to have substantial effect within its territory.

8. The United States government has an obligation to its citizens to provide protection against wrongful confiscations by foreign nations and their citizens, including the provision of private remedies.

And based on these findings, the act establishes provisions designed to force foreign companies into observing the U.S. embargo by threatening them with lawsuits and other penalties.

I hasten to add that while I have disagreed with the act, I do understand the frustration of some Cuban Americans seeking to restore their rights and freedoms in Cuba by means of a remedy as dramatic as this act. And I believe that the even more disturbing injustices experienced by the Palestinians and their frustrations require at least as dramatic a response.

What is important about framing an action in this way is that if focuses attention on the principles of justice and rights and on the people who are victimised by the abuse of these principles. And this is what I believe the Arab League must do.

It is important in this period to educate the West about the history of injustice that has been the fate of the Palestinian people. If necessary, action must be taken to demand restoration of their just rights. To establish the justification for taking these actions, the world must be reminded of the millions of lives that are at stake in this context.

It is imperative that there be a public accounting of the losses incurred by the Palestinians, and countries and businesses must be informed that they can no longer benefit at the expense of Palestinians losses. Both Israelis and Palestinians, and the world community as a whole, must know that the Palestinians are full human beings with rights and there will be accountability for actions that harm them. There are recent examples of Jews, Bosnians, South Africans, Poles and Cubans doing the same. Palestinian rights are no less worthy.

I am sure that some in the U.S. Congress will protest such an Arab action and use their special vocabulary reserved for any actions taken by Arabs — but when the humanity of the Palestinians is established and the reality of their losses and suffering is understood, more will be done and the balance might be restored.

Kabila scores high in Zaire

By Gwynne Dyer

ONE OF life's little pleasures over the past few months, as Laurent Kabila's ragtag but disciplined liberation army swept inexorably across Zaire, has been tracking the statements of U.S. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns. His arrogance and ignorance epitomise the bafflement of Western governments in the face of an Africa that is leaving the bad old ways behind.

"Mr. Kabila... needs to think about being a responsible person who can lead a government," said Burns in March, shortly after Kabila's alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL) took the city of Kisangani. "In anticipation of that, he needs to think about ways to preserve life."

Now, the ADFL's eight-month march across Zaire has been just about the least bloody war in African history. Virtually nobody was killed in the liberation of Kisangani. Yet for months the United States has been predicting a holocaust if the war ended with Kabila's troop marching into Kinshasa instead to agreeing to share power. And Burns, who was still in school the last time Kisangani was "liberated," regularly lectured Kabila about responsibility.

Kabila was already a "rebel" in the eastern Congo when Kisangani was last in the news (under the old colonial name of Stanleyville) 32 years ago. In fact, Kabila was already one of the leaders of the guerrilla movement fighting to revive the Democratic Republic of the Congo, proclaimed in 1960, whose first president, Patrice Lumumba, was killed by General Mobutu at the instigation of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in 1961.

In 1965, when the rebels seized what is now Kisangani, U.S. planes flew in Belgian paratroops from a British base to kill them and bring it back under Mobutu's control. (Even then, Mobutu's own army was so corrupt as to be utterly useless). Laurent Kabila knows all about where responsibility lies in this part of the world.

Yet right through this March and April, as Kabila's forces closed in on Kinshasa, taking the copper capital of Lubumbashi, then the diamond centre of Mbuji-Mayi, then Kikwit and Kenge — all with practically no violence — a chorus of Western voices, echoed by lazy media, treated Kabila like a wayward child who did not understand the danger of his actions. Zaire would break up if the war did not stop at once. The war would spill across Zaire's borders and set all Central Africa aflame.

The South Africans were roped in to chair negotiations for a "transitional government" in which Kabila would have to share power with Mobutu's people and figures from the Kinshasa "opposition" who were more amenable to Western manipulation. European Union Human Rights Commissioner Emma Bonino even warned that if Kabila replaced Mobutu, it would not necessarily be a change for the better.

As the ADFL troops closed the ring around Kinshasa last week, Nicholas Burns returned once again to the task of instructing Kabila in his responsibilities. "We are at a time of testing for Mr. Kabila," he intoned. "... And we hope very much that he will be able to meet these tests. We have very high standards."

Higher these days, presumably, than in the quarter-century just recently past when Washington solidly backed the dictator Mobutu despite the ruination he was visiting on his country for two decades.

But Burns cannot recall any of that stuff now. He is just concerned, in his high-minded way, that Kabila "does not have a track record as a government leader. He has held a variety of political and ideological positions throughout his long career in opposition. And we hope that he will be a responsible leader who believes in what the Zairian people deserve. And that is economic reform and reconstruction and political freedom."

If somebody patronised me in public as blatantly as that, I would seriously consider hitting him. Mercifully, an ocean separates Mr. Burns and Mr. Kabila, and the latter seems to have outgrown such childish impulses in any case.

So forget Washington's ham-handed attempts to corral Kabila into an "inclusive transitional government," and just consider what is really going on in the Congo (as we must now start calling it again) and in Africa.

First, black Africa's third most populous country (only Nigeria and Ethiopia are bigger) has escaped from the brutal dictator who has looted it ever since independence. Kabila cannot bring economic recovery overnight, and he does not intend to hold an early election — maybe in four years' time, guessed Kabila's spokesman Raphael Ghenda — but things were already getting better in the areas under his control, even in the midst of a war.

Studying Kabila's past for clues as to how he will behave in power today is about as useful as studying chicken bones: a man plays many roles in 35 years as a revolutionary leader. But four important things can be said in his favour: he was the only opposition leader never to compromise with Mobutu; he has never been suspected of serious corruption or wanton cruelty; he fought a clean war with minimum force — and he has the right friends.

The people who back Kabila are the region's leaders: honest, competent men like Uganda's Yoweri Museveni, Rwanda's Paul Kagame, Ethiopia's Meles Zenawi. They are the leading edge of a wave of second-generation leaders who are the best hope for Africa's future.

And who tried to keep Kabila from power? There were the Hutu militias who carried out the genocide in Rwanda and were then given shelter by Mobutu, and Mobutu's old friend Jonas Savimbi whose UNITA insurgents wrecked Angola. Plus the French, who helped organise white mercenaries to defend Mobutu and rallied the puppet presidents of client states like Gabon and the Central African Republic to give him diplomatic support. And (even though it did not actually back Mobutu), there was also the U.S. State Department.

A man is known not only by his friends, but also by his enemies. On both counts, Laurent Kabila scores very high.

LETTERS

Paying for one's deeds

To the Editor:

HAVING READ Rana Husseini and M. Khawaldeh's article "Man kills wife and four children" (Jordan Times, May 14, 1997), I would like to express my utter disgust towards the heinous crimes committed by Awad M. His crimes are a reflection of a backward mentality, influenced by blind passion and complete ignorance. Committing such an atrocious crime on the basis of "cleansing honour" is representative of a person of no honour.

We have witnessed several such cases in our beloved country over the years, and it is time for them to stop; such measures as the implementation of stricter laws and family education to men and women are just two options of many to deter people from committing such atrocities.

It is inconceivable to any civilised mind that one could reach such a rash conclusion and hastily carry out punishment in the evil manner Awad M. did. His assumption shows he is a sick individual who should be barred from reentering our civil, honourable and rational society.

I hope he will be made to pay for his disgusting, stomach churning crime.

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The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

IT OCCURRED TO ME...

Everything's coming up roses

By Ali Kassay

I HAVE frequently had the occasion to mention that, of all the agreeable aspects of life in Jordan, perhaps one of the most pleasing is the weather. From now until the end of November or beyond, it will be possible to plan a barbecue without having to say: "Weather permitting." During this whole period, climatic fluctuations will vary between hot, quite hot, very hot and uncomfortably cold, which I find infinitely preferable to the other variations on the themes of cold, bleak and wet.

So, spurred by the current spate of pleasantly hot weather, I ventured last Friday on an expedition to Jerash, primarily with the intention of buying faggous, the light green hairy cucumbers that form a perfect complement to the act of relaxing before television, and for which this city used to be famous. I say used to be because a thorough and diligent market search revealed no trace of this delicacy in the stalls.

To avoid returning to Amman with nothing gained, I decided to substitute expanding my horizons to expanding my waistline, so I went to take a look at the old city. The ruins of Jerash, of course, need no introduction. They stand as a testimony to the eternal greatness of the Jordanians — well, fine, Romans, really, but they were in Jordan when they were inspired to build this hub of the Decapolis which, as luck would have it, probably included more than ten cities. Still, we must not allow arithmetics get in the way of appreciating aesthetics.

Anyway, as I was saying, Jerash the beautiful, the rose-red city half as old as time — well, those among you who know their tourist brochures are probably wondering if old age has not caught up with me to the extent that I have started confusing my sites and quotations, and now it is merely a question of time, they will be saying to themselves, before yours in senility starts dribbling drivel and sticking straws in his hair. To these sceptics I say: "You have not visited Jerash lately." You see, someone, somewhere, appears to have misunderstood the directive to show Jordan at its best and brightest to mean that Jordan should be presented in a bright colour, and therefore he has started to reconstruct the ancient city using new stone that has a distinct tint of rose. Funnily enough, the emphasis appears to be on staircases. Wherever you turn there are staircases being built in pink stone.

Not that I object, mind you. Former U.S. President Ronald Reagan may have entertained serious reservations about what he termed pinko-liberals, but not me. I go with the Arab wisdom that God, in His infinite wisdom and munificence, created all things for a good reason, and when the purpose of a Divine act is not readily clear to us, the flaw is in our comprehension, so we fall back on our faith which guides us to the realisation that this is for our good. To be sure, God's creations include pink stone, so it must be there for a good reason. Perhaps, also, whoever formulated this philosophy had foreseen the decision to reconstruct Jerash using this material.

Still, I tried to apply my humble mortal logic in an attempt to understand what was happening and why. Perhaps, if this trend continues, our tourist brochures will invite people to: "Come to Jordan, a country that is in the pink." I mean, at least the stone will be.

Deputy finance minister resigns over Bibi scandal

TEL AVIV (AP) — In a sign of discontent within Benyamin Netanyahu's governing coalition, Israel's deputy finance minister resigned Tuesday, saying he wanted to be free to criticise the prime minister.

David Magen, who belongs to a breakaway faction of Mr. Netanyahu's Likud Party, first threatened to resign three weeks ago over the premier's handling of an influence-peddling scandal.

State prosecutors had decided to reject police recommendations to charge Mr. Netanyahu with fraud for allegedly appointing an attorney general who promised to end the corruption trial of a political ally — but they did say Mr. Netanyahu's behaviour was questionable and the suspicions appeared "not unfounded."

Mr. Magen was angry that Mr. Netanyahu then went on television to claim he had been cleared and lash out at the media and the opposition. That, Mr. Magen said, was "an insult to the intelligence of the Israeli public."

On Tuesday Mr. Magen suggested he had broader disagreements with the prime minister. As a member of parliament's rank-and-file he will be free to criticise the government constructively, primarily to promote social issues, he said.

"Ministers and deputy ministers are restricted from criticising the way the government functions," Mr. Magen said. "For a member of parliament, those restrictions don't exist."

As an example, he cited Mr. Netanyahu's decision to bow to a U.S. request to forfeit $50 million of the economic aid Washington gives Israel annually to Jordan. He termed the move "striking because (we) don't have money for social services."

Mr. Magen was a reluctant member of the government from the start. Several months before the May 1996 election that brought Mr. Netanyahu to power, he broke away from Likud to help form the blue-collar Gesher Party. Gesher then ran jointly with Likud in the election.

The case against Mr. Netanyahu is now before the Israeli Supreme Court, which is considering appeals by opposition lawmakers to force the prosecution to indict the prime minister.

No Middle East peace without end to Jewish settlements — Mubarak

BONN (AFP) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak told German leaders Tuesday there can be no peace in the Middle East until Israel stops building Jewish settlements in Arab east Jerusalem.

The German Foreign Ministry said Mr. Mubarak expressed concern and growing disappointment at the stagnation of the peace process, and called on the European Union (EU) as well as the United States to take a stronger political role in it.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who greeted Mr. Mubarak with military honours in Bonn Tuesday, for his part noted that the Egyptian leader had chosen to make his brief visit to Germany at an important moment for the peace process. However, Bonn has been keen not to present itself as any kind of mediator in the Middle East, and the chancellor made a point of stressing Mr. Mubarak's "very, very important" role in this respect.

The Egyptian president, who was accompanied by Foreign Minister Amr Musa, had extensive talks with German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel in Bonn Tuesday, a German Foreign Ministry statement said.

Mr. Kinkel has over the last month expressed the German government's opposition to the Jewish settlements which the Israeli government has insisted on building in the face of Palestinian resistance, thereby endangering the peace process. His ministry's statement Tuesday said: "The position of the German government and the European Union over Jewish settlements in east Jerusalem and the Palestinian territories has not changed."

The German minister said that the European Union was "determined to go on supporting the peace process in the framework of its possibilities," and referred to the work of the EU special envoy for the Middle East, Miguel Angel Moratinos. He also noted Germany's leading position in the EU as donor to the Palestinians, as well Egypt's particularly prominent role in the Middle East peace process.

"Everything must be done to prevent a complete collapse of the process," the ministry statement said. "Both sides agreed that joint efforts are necessary to get the peace process moving again and that everything that might further weigh down upon or hinder the peace process must be avoided."

During his 24-hour visit Mr. Mubarak, who arrived in Bonn Monday, was also meeting German Head of State Roman Herzog.

Damascus holds U.S. responsible

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syria said Tuesday that the United States is even more to blame than Israel for the collapse of the Middle East peace process and called for Arab countries to reconsider their position towards the effort.

The United States "is responsible, more than Israel, for the peace process impasse," the daily Al Baath, organ of the Syrian ruling party, said. Washington "thus loses any credibility in the international programme," the newspaper said. It called for "the Arabs to review the entire peace process following the U.S. decision to disengage from the process."

The paper referred to statements Sunday by the U.S. ambassador to Israel, Martin Indyk, in which he said that "the core bargain of Oslo has broken down." He said the Oslo process — a three-year-old trail of agreements designed to progressively extend self-rule to the Palestinians — had run aground due to mistrust between Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and the nationalist Israeli government of Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu.

"Israel was promised security and the Palestinians were promised self-government," Mr. Indyk said, noting that both sides had seen their aspirations frustrated during the year since Mr. Netanyahu came to power. U.S. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns downplayed Mr. Indyk's comments Monday, saying "the U.S. remains absolutely committed to negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis."

But Al Baath said, the United States "does not keep its promises and is satisfied with playing a role which can only be described as very biased to Israel and hostile to Arab rights."

Sit-in to protest new press law ends up in arrests and injuries...

(Continued from page 1)

the incident Ms. Halasa stated that her injuries included a knee injury, scratches and bruises after police struck her with clubs on her back.

She told the Jordan Times that Al Jazirah's four-member crew were at the location to cover the event rather than participate.

"We interviewed (opposition figure) Laith Shubeilat and afterwards our cameraman had gone to the car," she said. "I went to give him the keys and an officer yelled, 'stop them, arrest them, confiscate the camera.'"

At this point, she said, an altercation ensued in and around the Al Jazirah equipment van where she was sitting with Mr. Shubeilat and the Al Jazirah crew.

"We were attacked from all sides," she said told the Jordan Times. "They opened the car from the back, and they pulled me out by my hair and they pulled Shubeilat from the car."

Other journalists reported being grabbed, shoved, and otherwise assaulted.

Ms. Halasa said that following the incident, during which three of the camera crew were arrested, Al Jazirah's camera, microphone and film were confiscated.

In addition to the arrest of the Al Jazirah crew, which included Mohammad Ajlouni, Ala' Ramahi and Ahmad Shahabat, the Jordan Times had confirmation of the following arrests: Nour Al Din Khamaiseh and Salah Bani Hani (Al Arab Al Yawm), Hassan Ababneh (Al Mithaq), and Khaled Ramahi (Reuters). Sources also told the Jordan Times that those arrested included Mohammad Samhouri (Quds Al Arabi) and Munir Abdul Rahman (Quds Press). These arrests have not been confirmed.

Sources from the agencies confirmed that all those arrested had been released by 8:30 p.m.

Reacting to the protest and its aftermath, Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi was quoted by Jordan News Agency Petra as saying, in reference to the protest, that "Jordan is a democratic state, and every person has the right to express his views in the way he sees fit as long as it is within the parameters of the law."

He said last night during an interview with Jordan Television that the new law "in fact has raised the level of press freedom."

He reiterated Governor Nawayseh's position that the protest was held illegally.

"The gathering was not licensed by any government authority, nor did any party apply for such a license," he said. "In any civilised country you must first obtain a permit."

Journalists, professional associations and opposition figures reacted immediately to the law. Sunday, the council of the Jordan Press Association, with the exception of President Seif Sherif, resigned in protest. The following day, Mr. Sherif, along with the presidents of the country's 13 professional associations stated that they will resign from their posts on May 24 if the government does not rescind the law.

All three parties have called on members of Parliament to hold an extraordinary Parliamentary session, which can only be convened with support of an absolute majority of the 80-member Lower House.

Dr. Mutawi said that "since we are approaching general (parliamentary) elections, any discussion or debate on the amendments of the law will not be objective, but will be used for electioneering purposes.

"Any temporary law has to be submitted to the new Parliament which has the right to accept or reject it," he said.

Following Tuesday's protest, the heads of the professional associations met to discuss further action.

After the meeting, Bassem Dajani, president of the Jordan Medical Association, said that the council would continue to insist on its position, and said that the council "deplored the events of today during which males and females were attacked, hit and assaulted."

He told the Jordan Times that the council was considering other options to resolve the crisis.

"The field is open for other civil associations and groups to start acting," he said. "There is a meeting of the Legal Committee of the Jordan Bar Association either Wednesday or Thursday to discuss possible legal action, and there is a possibility that journalists and writers stop writing."

At press time last night, JPA President Seif Sherif said that the JPA council members had withdrawn their resignations, submitted on Sunday, and that the general assembly of the association would convene on June 6 to discuss the issue.

Mr. Sherif told the Jordan Times that the council withdrew their resignations because they preferred to negotiate with the government over the law.

"We are ready and willing to negotiate," said Mr. Sherif. "And I think the government is ready and willing to negotiate. They have indicated this."

Mr. Sherif, added that the JPA has not yet been in contact with the government and could not say whether he had any official commitment that the government was willing to meet with journalists over the matter.

However, Dr. Mutawi said yesterday that the government had no intention whatsoever of revoking the changes in the law under any circumstances."

Cypriot reconciliation concert dubbed a success despite clashes

NICOSIA (AP) — The traditional calm of Cyprus was shattered by a night of rioting by Greek Cypriots angered at a U.N.-sponsored concert that was intended to promote reconciliation on this divided island.

Police said Tuesday that 39 people — including 24 policemen and 15 demonstrators — were slightly injured during clashes between security forces and some 200 protesters.

At least 55 people were arrested, police said.

The protesters initially tried to storm Monday night's concert in the U.N.-patrolled zone that splits the capital into Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot sectors.

Helmeted riot police manning barbed-wire barricades around the concert site used clubs and tear gas to push back the demonstrators. They retreated, then smashed the windows of stores and lit bonfires in the streets.

Police spokesman Glafcos Xenos said shops on six streets sustained damage. He said that seven police vehicles and two motorcycles also were damaged.

There was no immediate estimate of the cost of the damages.

The concert, organised jointly by the United States and the United Nations, was the first event to bring together young people from both the north and south since the island's unofficial partition in 1974.

The 4,000 Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot teenagers estimated by the United Nations in the audience seemed to ignore the protests, many of them singing and dancing together in rare scenes of harmony.

The U.N. resident representative Gustave Feissel hailed the concert as a success despite the rioting.

"The young people sent the right message across the island, which hopefully will be received by the others," said Mr. Feissel.

There had been opposition to the concert on both sides of the island. Some had to do with the date of its staging.

Monday marked the annual "day of mourning and remembrance" observed in both Greece and Cyprus for 350,000 Greeks from the Black Sea region killed by Turkish troops in a series of pogroms at the end of World War II.

In the north, Turkish Cypriot groups supporting the permanent partition of the island had urged a boycott, as did Greek Cypriot refugee groups.

Protesters in the north stoned a bus taking people to the concert and the car of Burat Kut, a Turkish mainland pop-singer who was the main attraction at the concert together with Sakis Rouvas, a singer from Greece.

The eastern Mediterranean island has been unofficially divided since Turkey invaded the country in 1974 to protect the Turkish Cypriot minority following an abortive coup by Greek Cypriot supporters of union with Greece.

Only Turkey recognises the breakaway Turkish Cypriot state.

The two singers told a joint press conference they were both happy with the concert, but were disappointed by the opposition.

"The important thing was the message of love and peace we conveyed to the people, especially the young people," said Mr. Rouvas.

"One day everyone will appreciate what we did tonight," said Mr. Kut.

Israeli Arabs barred from buying Jewish land in Israel...

(Continued from page 1)

inhabited area. That area is owned by the semi-governmental Jewish National Fund (JNF), which under its own by-laws cannot sell land to non-Jews. And while Israelis and even foreign Jews can buy land inside the Palestinian territories occupied by the Jewish state in 1967, the reverse is not allowed. Palestinians in the West Bank and Arab east Jerusalem, as non-citizens, cannot buy Israeli land and in many cases have had land inside Israel taken from them and handed over to Jews, Mr. Zeidman said. Approximately 13 per cent of Israeli land had been declared "absentee property," land which was seized by the government after its Palestinian owners fled their homes in the 1948 war or later to settle in the West Bank, Gaza Strip or abroad.

"The vast majority of absentee property has been leased to Jews," Mr. Zeidman said. "The Palestinian owner of a piece of land in west Jerusalem may be present in east Jerusalem, but Israeli law considers him absent and expropriates the land, almost always to hand over to Jews," he said.

The remainder of the land is leased by the government for private use or is used for public purposes. The sparsely populated Negev Desert takes up around half of Israel. No law bans a Jewish renter from selling his lease to an Arab, but such sales are rare. JNF President Yitzhak Elyeshiv said they totalled around "several hundred dunums" over the past few years. A dunum equals a tenth of a hectare, or a quarter of an acre.

But Tuesday Mr. Elyeshiv raised alarm bells over even that amount, calling it a "radical increase" in land transfers to Arabs and vowed that the JNF would "prevent at all costs the sale of Jewish lands to non-Jews" by buying up lands that Arabs attempt to purchase. For both sides, land ownership is a national issue. Israel seeks to keep its character as a "Jewish state" while the PNA wants to stop the sale to Jews of lands which it seeks for an eventual state.

Many Jewish settlements in the West Bank are partially built on land sold by local Palestinians to Israelis. "The Palestinian authority does not agree with killing. But it will punish those who are traitors to their country and sell land to the Israelis," Mr. Arafat's spokesman Marwan Kanafani said.

Turkish army killed over 1,300 Kurdish separatists...

(Continued from page 1)

More than 10,000 Turkish troops poured into northern Iraq last Wednesday for a joint military operation with the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) against the PKK.

Anatolia said fleeing rebels were headed Tuesday towards the border with Iran in an area controlled by an Iraqi Kurdish organization, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), a rival of the KDP.

They are headed mainly to PUK-controlled Suleymaniyeh, while some are also thought to be seeking refuge across the border in Iran.

On Sunday Turkey asked Iran to take the necessary steps to prevent PKK rebels from hiding out on Iranian territory.

Anatolia said some rebels were fleeing west towards Syria, buying mules for $1,000 each from local people.

Security officials in Diyarbakir, the government's base of operations in the southeast, said earlier that Turkish warplanes made a pre-dawn bombing raid Tuesday on PKK positions in northern Iraq.

F-16 and F-4 fighter planes had taken off from the Diyarbakir air base in southeastern Turkey at 4:00 a.m., the officials added without elaborating.

U.S. leaks study of Jewish settlements...

(Continued from page 1)

tion efforts.

Mr. Netanyahu simply dismissed the matter.

"This is unfounded and ungrounded. We would not be building if there were so many empty houses," Mr. Netanyahu told reporters during a tour of Jewish settlements in the occupied Jordan valley.

"There is no (U.S.) report, this is a press article," he said.

According to the U.S. survey, carried out early this year with the help of satellite photographs, there are 9,939 unoccupied units out of 41,000 homes in West Bank settlements, representing about 26 per cent of the total. In the Gaza Strip, 56 per cent of homes are empty, it said.

Mr. Netanyahu ridiculed the U.S. figures.

"They speak about 2,000 empty housing units in Ariel, and in fact Ariel has 2,000 houses and people live there," he said, referring to a settlement in the northern West Bank.

Mr. Netanyahu has refused any freeze on settlement building, saying expansion is necessary to allow for "natural growth" of the Jewish communities. An estimated 140,000 settlers live in the West Bank alongside about 1.4 million Arabs.

The U.S. official quoted in Haaretz countered that the settlement building was politically motivated "to satisfy the coalition partners of the prime minister, like the national religious party" — a far right, pro-settlement group.

Israeli-Palestinian peace talks broke down when Israel began on March 18 building 6,500 more Jewish homes in Arab east Jerusalem, which the Palestinians hope to make the capital of a future state.

U.S. officials said their West Bank figures did not include occupied Arab east Jerusalem, but they asserted that the rate of occupancy of Jewish apartments in the disputed sector of the city was very low.

The U.S. figures were also disputed by the anti-settlement Peace Now movement, which said its data showed that only about 12 per cent of homes in the occupied territories were unoccupied.

"This is a real exaggeration," peace now spokeswoman Hagit Hayaari told AFP. "If it were 26 per cent, it would serve our interests, but it isn't."

Since coming to power a year ago, Mr. Netanyahu's government has approved construction of 2,218 new housing units in the West Bank and is preparing authorisations for nearly 7,000 more, the U.S. report said.

U.S. officials including President Bill Clinton have unsuccessfully pressed Mr. Netanyahu to freeze settlement building pending negotiations which Israel has promised to conduct with the Palestinians on the final status of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Arab east Jerusalem.

After Mr. Ross' latest mission, the Palestinians complained angrily that the U.S. envoy had not put sufficient pressure on Israel to halt settlement building.

"The American position since 1967 has been that settlements are illegal, but how come they won't say that now?" chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat told AFP Tuesday.

Italian government to swap...

(Continued from page 1)

and infrastructure development projects, as well as water projects.

Sources said the Hammamat Ma'in Health Spa, the expansion of the Marka Military Hospital, the establishment of the Aqaba Free Zone and the construction of a Red Sea-Dead Sea canal were among the development projects discussed between the Crown Prince and Mr. Prodi.

The debt-swap is expected to be initialed at the beginning of the next fiscal year.

The debt-swap is made possible by the recent promulgation of an Italian law which allows the swapping of 10 per cent of foreign debts up to $20 million.

The Crown Prince's talks with the Italian prime minister also touched on the refugees' issue and the burdens that the Kingdom had to endure as a result of sheltering and assisting Palestinian refugees and displaced persons in its "challenge for human dignity."

In 1995, it was estimated that out of a total of 3.2 million Palestinian refugees registered with United Nations Works and Relief Agency (UNRWA), 1.3 million reside in Jordan, the largest concentration outside Palestine.

The Crown Prince expressed hope that the refugee issue will be among the priorities in the agenda of the forthcoming Council of the European Foreign Ministers meeting in Amsterdam scheduled for next month and urged the Italian government to push all European Union (EU) member states to take actions vis-a-vis this humanitarian emergency.

On Monday evening, the Crown Prince's meeting with Monsignor Jean-Louis Tauran, secretary of state for foreign relations at the Vatican, focused on the "highly significant and emotive issue" of the position of Jerusalem.

Reiterating that Jordan considers Israel's annexation of Arab east Jerusalem in the wake of the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict as null and void, he called for intensified international efforts to turn Jerusalem into a paradigm for tolerance, peaceful co-existence and genuine cooperation.

Visiting NATO's Defence College in Rome on Tuesday morning, the Crown Prince stressed the importance of a broader and humanitarian approach to security issues.

Jordan is currently engaged in a political and security dialogue with NATO, after NATO foreign ministers launched exploratory discussions with five Mediterranean states outside the alliance (Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Israel and Mauritania) in 1995.

But the lest-motive of the Crown Prince's talks with Italian officials was the need for "soft security," or a security which takes into consideration the humanitarian aspect of economics and politics, as the key for the solution of Middle East crisis.

The Crown Prince is currently in London, on the second leg of his European working trip. Minister of Foreign Affairs Fayez Tarawneh, who together with Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani, was with the Crown Prince in Rome, is accompanying him to the U.K.

In London, the Crown Prince was scheduled to continue his efforts to guarantee European support and active involvement in the peace process through talks with the British foreign minister.

Palestinians see hardline Israeli policies threatening economic development efforts

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times.

AMMAN — Palestinian officials warned Tuesday that hardline Israeli policies will ruin any Palestinian economic development endeavour in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and lead the region into a disaster.

Speaking following the inauguration of a U.N.-sponsored seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people entitled "Promoting Palestinian Human Development," Palestinian Economic Minister Mahir Masri told reporters that world pressure, especially from the United States, is the only solution to Israeli violations of peace agreements signed with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

"An Israeli siege is imposed around Palestinian territories. The Palestinian economy is divided into two parts because of the closure enforced on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, therefore the Palestinian market is divided as well," Mr. Masri said.

"Palestinian-made goods are not able to move from Gaza to the West Bank and vice versa. Palestinian goods find difficulties in reaching Jordanian, Egyptian, other Arab and European markets. Palestinian individuals are not able to move freely. Therefore all economic development elements are missing...this will lead to the destruction of the peace process and bring disaster to the region," Mr. Masri added.

He said that U.N. statistics indicated that the Palestinian economy's annual loss, because of the continuous Israeli closure of the Palestinian territories, amounts to $ 1.2 billion

Nasir Qadwa, Palestinian representative at the United Nations, called upon the United States to maintain pressure on Israel to halt its measures which cause hardships to the Palestinians and reach a breakthrough in the stalled peace process.

Dr. Qadwa said economic development in the Palestinian territories is not possible as long as the peace process remains deadlocked.

"It is difficult to separate between the economic solution and the political one. Any economic development in the Palestinian territories will lead to political independence. Therefore if there is no political independence there will be no economic progress in Palestine."

He said that Israel's goal was to keep the Palestinian economy "hostage" in order to continue the Jewish state's monopolisation of the Palestinian market.

"Israel is prohibiting any progress in the Palestinian economy. This is the Israeli policy and we have to understand it to know how to deal with it," Dr. Qadwa said.

He told reporters that Israeli move to ease closures in the West Bank may result in some improvement, but "it will not lead to major economic development. The solution is a revision by the Israeli government to its overall political position towards the Palestinians."

The three-day seminar, which was inaugurated by Deputy Prime Minister for Services Abdullah Ensour and sponsored by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP), was attended by more than 25 countries and several United Nations agencies.

Dr. Ensour said in his inauguration speech that the "stalemate and regression in the peace process rings the bell of danger and requires everybody's effort to save the region and its people and to halt the deterioration which could bring the area to the language of war and struggle."

The minister said that the solution is an overall "'commitment by all the concerned parties to implement all peace agreements signed... to bring back confidence-building and return the peace process on track."

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in his speech, which was read on his behalf by Peter Hansen, commissioner general of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) said that U.N. agencies played very important roles in developing economic and social assistance programmes to respond to the need of the Palestinian people during the transitional period."

Mr. Hansen added that relocation of UNRWA headquarters from Vienna to Gaza "undoubtedly enhanced the agency's capacity for programme delivery. It is hoped that international donors will continue to contribute generously to UNRWA's activities in order to resolve its difficult situation and provide the level and quality of services needed by refugees and their families."

He added that the "20 U.N. agencies and programmes are currently operational or seeking to become operational in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, within the framework of the integrated programmes of assistance adopted in 1995, demonstrate the extent of commitment made by the U.N. to assist the Palestinian people during this crucial period."

The CEIRPP chairman Ibra Deguene Ka told the gathering that the objective behind the seminar is to "consider the need and the possibilities of lasting human development as well as mobilising international action on behalf of the Palestinian people."

"We are aware that, ultimately, only the end of the occupation, which has lasted almost 30 years now, only a just settlement that respects *the right of all the parties* and the establishment of normal and trusting relations among all the peoples of the region on the basis of mutual respect will usher in full economic and social development in the Palestinian territory and the region," he said.

Frustrated taxi owners at point of desperation

By Samir Ghawi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — So frustrated are the representatives of taxi owners that they have given up hope of receiving government approval to raise transport fares.

"Since 1989, when the currency was devalued, until now, we were not given permission to increase the fares" said Abdul Karim Al Mashayekh, treasurer and board member of the Association of Taxi Owners.

"Prices of fuel were hiked by 20 per cent in 1989, but we were only allowed to raise fares by 10 per cent, on the promise that another *amendment in fares would* follow after two months when detailed studies would be finalised," Mr. Mashayekh said.

He said the two months passed and the government changed without fulfilling the promise. "Not only that," the board member said, "we have talked with six transport ministers since that time, but all we could get were studies and field surveys which ended up in the drawers of officials without any action until each minister left."

Asked if they had submitted a request or a complaint to Transport Minister Bassam Saket, Mr. Mashayekh said the association had not yet approached him because the members have reached the conviction that "no one is interested in their welfare and that the government is only procrastinating their case."

Mr. Mashayekh told the Jordan Times that the government only compensates them for the minimum level when fuel prices are raised, but does not consider operational costs and other increases in the cost of living.

He said that taxi owners only hope for a 10 or 20 fils increase per passenger or per kilometre, which is not much.

"Is it fair that a bus operating on diesel charges JD6 per person for a trip to Damascus and taxis are not allowed to charge more than JD4 a trip even when they operate on benzene and can only carry five passengers" Mr. Mashayekh asked.

Responding to these complaints, Land Transport Director Marwan Hmoud said the Ministry of Transport is undertaking a practical study to ensure that taxi owners receive fair treatment and a reasonable income.

He revealed that his directorate has completed a field survey recently and is currently studying all elements of operational costs of taxis. In addition, a review was conducted on all the routes in terms of lengths, conditions and the number of public taxis operating on these routes.

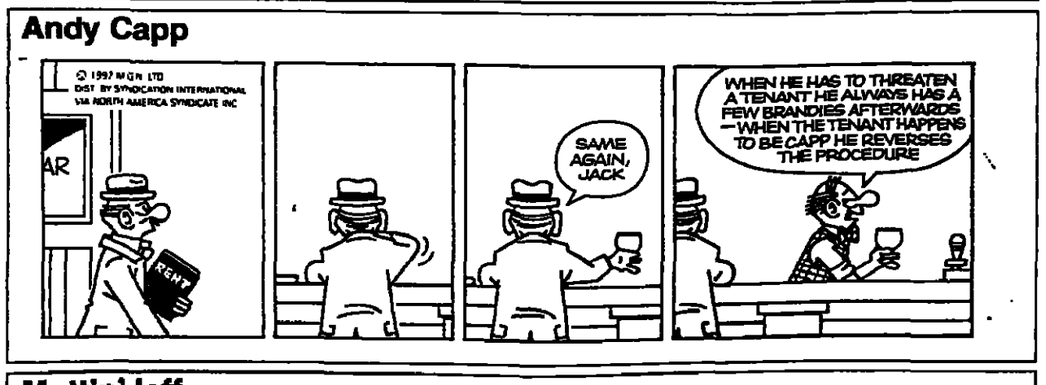
Noting that there are 72 route lines on which between 3,000 and 4,000 taxis are operating, Mr. Hmoud said, careful and thorough studies were needed and patience was also essential in this regard.

He said the study would very soon be submitted to Dr. Saket, and he hoped that positive results would emerge.

Asked whether the matter required a political decision to be carried out, Mr. Hmoud refused to comment and replied "that the issue is a sensitive one that affects a large part of the society," and, as such, it should be handled with care.

Peanuts

Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates — Prices as at 20/05/97 18:46

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.6947	0.6088	1.4055	113.73	1.3742	1667.60	1.9050	5.7060
DE Mark	0.5901	-	0.3587	0.8296	67.08	0.8109	983.13	1.1241	3.3663
GB Sterling	1.6426	2.7853	-	2.3079	186.35	2.2573	2738.05	3.1292	9.3727
CH Franc	0.7115	120.42	0.4323	-	80.86	0.9769	1184.72	135.45	4.0535
JP Yen	0.0088	1.4894	0.5344	1.2354	-	1.2081	14.65	167.45	5.0133
CA Dollar	0.7277	1.2459	0.4443	1.0400	1.21	-	1222.21	1.4004	4.1966
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0157	0.3647	0.0842	1468.21	0.8236	-	11.42	3.4187
NL Guilder	0.5249	88.90	0.3193	73.77	59.65	0.7211	874.70	-	2.9946
FR Franc	0.1753	0.2969	0.1065	24.6242	19.90	0.2408	33.38	33.3800	-

Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7080	3.7504	0.3770	3.6395	0.3020	3.6715	1538.00	3.3895
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	-	5.2972	0.5325	5.1405	0.4266	5.1857	2172.32	4.7874
GB Sterling	0.2666	0.1888	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0805	0.98	410.09	0.9038
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8781	9.9485	-	9.65	0.8011	9.74	4079.79	8.9911
Qatar Dinar	0.2748	0.1945	1.0305	1.0305	-	0.0830	1.01	422.59	0.9313
Kuwait Dinar	3.3111	2.3443	12.4181	1.2482	12.05	-	12.16	5092.55	0.9313
Emirates Dinar	0.2724	0.1928	1.0215	0.1027	0.9913	0.0823	-	418.90	0.9232
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4603	2.4385	0.2451	2.3664	0.1964	2.3872	-	2.2038
Egyptian	0.2950	0.2089	1.1065	0.1112	1.0738	0.0891	1.0832	453.76	-

Energy

Oils	Last	revious
Brent	20.20	20.45
W. Texa	21.25	21.45
Bonny	20.20	20.45
Dubai	18.95	19.20
UL Gas	195.00	195.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4520	0.16224	0.37505	30.338
AE Dirham	0.2724	0.4617	0.16572	0.38327	30.9905
KW Dinar	3.3111	5.61167	2.0145	4.65766	376.79
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.4964	1.61394	3.73274	301.841
CY Pound	1.9784	3.3512	1.2026	2.7797	224.913

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	342.6	343.1
Silver (oz's)	4.71	4.73
Platinum (oz's)	394.5	395.5
AL (3 Months)	1641	1642
CU (3 Months)	2465	2469
Zinc (3 Months)	1344	0
Lead (3 Months	620	0
NI (3 Months)	7680	7690

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)

Period / C'ncy	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	1 Year
USD	5.63	5.62	5.90	5.87	6.00
GBP	6.19	6.25	6.38	6.56	6.69
JPY	0.53	0.43	0.62	0.71	0.81
DEM	2.88	2.94	2.93	3.00	3.12
FRF	3.20	3.33	3.36	3.42	3.42
CHF	1.43	1.43	1.43	1.50	1.56
ITL	6.67	6.58	6.47	6.37	6.35

Main Equity Indices

Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls
NewYork	DOW JONES	7160.06	-68.82	-0.95	7228.05	7152.64	7228.88
Newyork	S&P 500	827.08	-6.19	-0.74	833.3	826.41	833.27
London	FT-SE 100	4607.5	-37.7	-0.81	4646.2	4600.4	4645.2
Tokyo	NIKKIE 225	20332.83	-156.92	-0.77	20612.3	20245.2	20489.8
Paris	CAC 40	2751.11	-33.17	-1.19	2762.64	2731.17	2784.28
Frankfurt	DAX	3543.43	-61.12	-1.7	3557.39	3533.71	3604.55

Energy

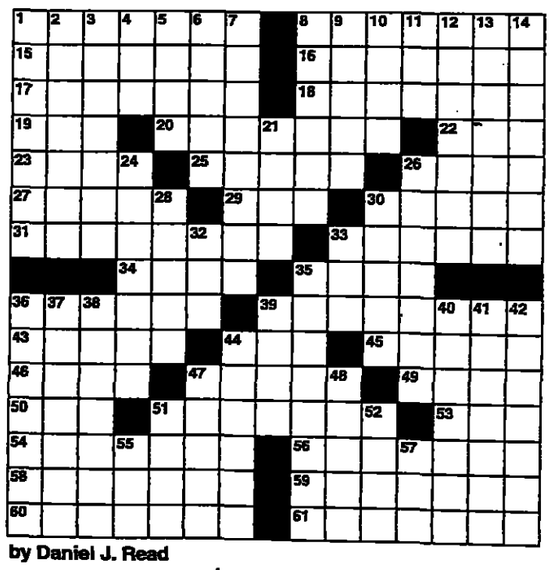
Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	268.08	Spot
Cocoa ($/ton)	1495	Spot
Sugar ($/ton)	323	Spot
Wheat ($/ton)	167.5	Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	23.55	Spot
Tea (stg/kg)	157	Spot
Barley ($/bsh)	0	Spot
Rice ($/ton)	480	Spot

*** JOD Cross Rates**

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1587	1.1645
DE Mark	0.4147	0.4168
CH Franc	0.4961	0.4986
FR Franc	0.1231	0.1237
JP Yen	0.6224	0.6255
NL Guilder	0.3689	0.3707
IT Lira	0.4226	0.4247

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword



by Daniel J. Read

ACROSS
1 Winter melons
8 — bird (strong flyer)
15 Disentangle
16 Texas city
17 Uneven
18 Relies (on)
19 Spanish aunt
20 Chooses
22 Foot part
23 Bluish-green
25 Prima donnas
26 Grotto
27 Charlotte — (sweet dish)
29 Use a laser
30 Dealt with
31 Regards with contempt
33 Cheap restaurants
34 — of March
35 Fender blemish
36 Semitic language
39 Formal decree
43 Turkish official
44 Wrong: pref.
45 "Illiad" author
46 Hog fat
47 Helicopter part
49 Folk knowledge
50 — nutshell (briefly)
51 Enigmas
53 Swindle: var.
54 Kneecap
56 Tree-shaded promenade
58 Artist's studio
59 Hired
60 Cake or pie
61 Grommets

DOWN
1 Flan ingredient
2 Relic
3 Composer of waltzes
4 Reverence
5 Prejudice
6 Queried
7 Represents conventionally
8 Reckless
9 Helps a criminal
10 Playful bites
11 Spanish cheer
12 Freaked out
13 MA school
14 Sows again
21 Le Gallienne and Gabor
24 Was ambitious
26 Dominate
28 Diving duck
30 Child's play
32 Make stitches
33 — Moines
35 Lay waste
36 Chopper landing spot
37 Give off
38 Scolds
39 Elegant display
40 Comedienne Coca
41 Green gem
42 Mining tools
44 Austrian composer
47 Straightedge
48 Type of race
51 Ballet movement
52 Japanese drink
55 Golfer Ernie
57 Singer Torme

C	A	D	S		L	A	S	E	R		S	P	A	
A	B	E	T		A	C	T	O	N		T	U	B	S
P	E	E	R		T	H	E	N	A	T	U	R	A	L
E	S	P	A	L	I	E	R			R	A	I	S	E
			I	O	N	S		S	T	O	R	M	E	D
F	L	A	G	S			S	T	R	U	T			
E	I	G	H	T	M	E	N	O	U	T		T	I	P
T	A	R	T		O	P	I	N	E		S	H	O	O
E	R	A		C	O	O	P	E	R	S	T	O	W	N
			P	O	N	C	E			A	R	R	A	Y
A	B	O	L	I	S	H		E	D	G	E			
L	O	R	E	N			P	L	E	A	S	A	N	T
M	R	B	A	S	E	B	A	L	L		S	C	A	R
A	N	E	T		P	A	N	E	L		E	R	I	E
	E	D	S		A	R	E	N	A		D	E	L	E

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HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, MAY 21, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Be sure to get all the necessary career activities out of the way today, so that you will have the days ahead much more freely. Leave yourself some time to spend later this evening and thereby making your life less stressful.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Find a way today to improve your efficiency so you'll have more time for yourself and thereby not rushing around so much. A new contact can help your financial status later this evening, so listen carefully.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Study your obligations today, and take care of those which are most pressing. You will find that your mate is very supportive in your career activities, so show that you do appreciate his or her enthusiasm.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Make practical plans with your fellow associates today, and get their approval of your ideas before proceeding. Do something special to please your mate, and he or she will show you how much you are appreciated.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Use some enthusiasm today when handling your more mundane chores, and you'll soon be finished. Take some time for personal pleasures later this evening, especially those with involved your loved ones.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Make some special arrangements today to meet with fellow associates and devise a course of action for your success. Don't take any risks with your reputation or your health later this evening and thereby become prosperous.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) This is a good day today to take care of little tasks which need doing around the house or those connected with career activities. A close friend can offer some fine advice, so pick his or her brain.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Any communications or career activities will be successful today, however, pleasure will be found only with loved ones. Visit a friend who is feeling poorly and make him or her feel much more content.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Seek out the advice today of an expert before you go on that little trip with a friend. Be sure you watch your budget later this evening, which could always use some improvement for those lean times in the days ahead.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Do some labour towards gaining your personal goals today, then attend to improving the appearance of your property. Don't spend too much on any changes which could leave the well dry and incomplete.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Get the support of your mate today before beginning a new project. Tonight is a good time for the social scene, especially with close friends. Try to use your time more profitable in the days ahead.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) A trusted friend can give you the support your need today if you let person know of your wishes. Be more thoughtful of your mate later this evening and show him or her more respect, which will be appreciated.

Birthstone of May: Emerald — Citrine

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

JWICO boosts local sales and exports to JD5.7 million

** DESPITE THE "unsuitable market conditions," the Jordan Wood Industries Company (JWICO) succeeded in boosting local sales by 15 per cent. However, stiff competition has forced the company to lower its profit margin as clients have become more sensitive to prices, JWICO Chairman Najib Qubein told the general assembly. The company was also successful in hiking exports by 75 per cent as its products reached new markets in Jeddah, Beirut, Nazareth, Ramallah and Abu Dhabi in addition to those in Libya and Yemen.

As a whole, sales increased by 15.4 per cent as they reached JD5.7 million of which the amount of exports was JD275,000. As a result of discounts given to face competition and due to increased costs brought about by higher interest rates on credits to finance expansion projects, the net profit was down by 29 per cent. After reviewing the company's 1996 performance and the financial statements, the general assembly approved distributing JD150,000 in cash dividends at a rate of 10 per cent.

According to the 1996 annual report, JWICO has a total of JD1.19 million in retained earnings. In terms of capital, the company's total shareholders' equity amounts to JD3.9 million, 2.6 per cent higher than the total at the end of 1995.

Other financial figures show total short and long-term credit at JD3.73 million, JD899,000 more that the total debt of 1995. This rise in borrowing was to finance expansion work and raising the level of inventories. However, the working capital was JD955,000 as total current assets were much higher than total current liabilities.

Total assets of JWICO rose by 10.5 per cent, to JD8.8 million at the end of last year of the amount, fixed assets after depreciation increased by 56.3 per cent. (Al Dustour + Al Aswaq).

Lower sales to Syria, Iraq and strong local competition push Sulpho Chemicals into loss

** AS A result of a sharp drop in exports to Syria, the Jordan Sulpho Chemicals Company posted a JD961.000 loss last year, a member of the board of directors told the general assembly.

Wasef Azar, who presided over the ordinary meeting, told the shareholders that Syria did not renew the trade protocol with Jordan and that also due to the fact that three Syrian companies started to produce the same products, the sales to Syria have declined by a large amount. He mentioned that Syrian market used to absorb 30 per cent of the company's production during past years.

Mr. Azar indicated that due to the continued sanctions on Iraq and the reduction in Jordanian-Iraqi trade protocol also contributed to lower sales.

Competition in the local market was another factor, Mr. Azar pointed out, as the competitors sold sulphonic acid, which is the main product for the company, at 14 per cent less than the average price. Such a low price, prompted traditional clients of the company to shift their purchases to the competitions, he said.

Mr. Azar told the shareholders that the company has made a future plan to sell its products in new markets in Africa and Europe in addition to expanding the regional market.

According to the 1996 annual report, the company had a JD9.28 million in total assets of which JD4.16 million were in current assets. Total current liabilities amounted to JD4.26 and total shareholders' equity stood at JD3.87 million after taking into consideration that paid-up capital amounted to JD4.50 million and accumulated losses were JD1.58 million (Al Ra'i + Al Aswaq).

AFM trading soars again

By Ahmed Naser
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Amman Financial Market (AFM) Tuesday witnessed a surge in the trade volume when 429,151 shares worth JD1,225,198 were traded.

The Jordan Cement Factories (JCF) made-up JD600,263 of the total trade volume and the price of its share went up from JD3.800 to JD3.930 yesterday.

The JCF shares had started to rise Saturday from JD3.750 to JD3.800 when 85,838 shares worth JD326,086 were traded. Prices held steady Sunday and Monday.

Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) shares shot up Tuesday from JD3.400 to JD3.500 when 31,950 shares worth JD110,223 were traded. JPMC shares had gone up on Saturday from JD3.330 to JD3.430 when the volume of trade reached JD1,149,714. Prices on Sunday declined to JD3.400 but held steady Monday.

"There is large demand on phosphate in the world for fertiliser industries and there is a constant search for consistent sources of it," Mohammad Badr Khan of the JPMC said when asked about the reason behind the current high demand on phosphate shares in a telephone interview to the Jordan Times.

National Portfolio Securities shares accounted for JD128,465 of the trade volume, and prices went up from JD1.110 to JD1.170. The price of the shares had fluctuated between JD1.080 to JD1.110.

Arab Bank sets up Islamic bank

AMMAN (R) — Arab Bank said Tuesday it had set up Jordan's second Islamic bank, Arab Islamic International Bank, with capital of 40 million dinars ($56.5 million), using the licence of a failed investment bank.

"At the request of the Central Bank to buy the troubled bank, Amman Bank for Investment, the Arab Bank has agreed to buy its licence and set up the Arab Islamic International Bank," Arab Bank chairman, Abdul Majid Shoman, told Reuters.

The new wholly-owned subsidiary of Arab Bank, one of the leading financial institutions in the region, would start its banking operations under Islamic banking rules immediately, Mr. Shoman said.

Jordan's Central Bank took control of troubled Amman Bank for Investment last March, effectively putting the loss-making bank, one of Jordan's six investment banks, under its custody.

Arab Bank, by far Jordan's largest bank with an extensive global network and total assets of over $20.7 billion, was prodded by the Central Bank to swallow up Amman Bank for Investment after various failed attempts to salvage it, bankers said.

Arab Bank won attractive terms for the sale which liquidated the bank as a legal entity and ensures it is not liable for the troubled bank's doubtful debts, estimated to be in excess of JD20 million.

Under the deal, the liabilities would be assumed by the Central Bank while Arab Bank would only take over whatever assets and deposits it had, Mr. Shoman said.

"There are no obligations or liabilities on Arab Bank. The Central Bank will take over the troubled bank's debts. We will get the bank clean of any liabilities," said Mr. Shoman without elaborating.

The Arab Bank, the oldest Palestinian bank established in Jerusalem in 1930, is primarily interested in using the bank's lucrative licence to operate an Islamic banking unit, seen as a future growth area.

Jordan Central Bank has practically stopped issuing bank licenses in what it views as an overcrowded banking market with 20 private banks.

The new Arab Islamic International Bank will operate in Jordan and targets expansion in both the Arab World and internationally, Mr. Shoman said.

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DANISH JORDANIAN DAIRY COMPANY EXPANDS PRODUCTION OF HIGH QUALITY PRODUCTS

Manufacturing high quality products that live up to the needs and tastes of exceptional consumers is the primary aim of the Danish Jordanian Dariy Company, with its high storage and output capacities, the company is considered the largest firm in Jordan.

Mr Maher Al Hourany, the general manager, says, "the company continually strives to achieve the international standards required for manufacturing the highest quality products."

He added: "It was the first project to function on a regional level, exporting to neighbouring countries, the products were designed to genuinely reflect the company's good reputation, production was run in accordance with a carefully designed quality control system."

Now as the challenge grows larger, with other companies joining in, the Danish Jordanian Co. seeks not only to expand the scope of production, but also to introduce much needed products at competitive prices. The company has more than 98 products which are widely circulated throughout local and international markets.

The company produces the regions main dairy products including yoghurts, cheese, milk, etc. Also they have a long-standing reputation for producing different kinds of natural juices and drinks in addition to a number of ice creams.

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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUSEDAY 20/05/1997

	PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
	269.000	213.000	ARAB BANK	11.8	1.56	2	120	31040	259.00	257.00	2.00-
N	2.100	1.680	JOR.NATIONAL BK.	E	0.00	11	7010	12602	1.80	1.79	.01-
	5.500	4.100	CAIRO AMMAN BANK	10.3	3.00	8	17000	85000	5.04	5.00	.04-
	3.600	2.760	BANK OF JORDAN	10.8	0.00	3	1000	3000	3.00	3.00	-
	1.210	.880	MID.EAST INV.BK.	70.3	0.00	6	1150	1218	1.08	1.07	.01-
	2.480	2.120	INDUSTRIAL DEV.BK.	8.2	7.62	1	200	444	2.22	2.22	-
	5.100	4.250	THE HOUSING BK.	14.6	3.96	2	110	538	4.90	4.90	-
	2.950	2.440	JOR.KUWAIT BANK	19.0	0.00	8	17320	45377	2.60	2.62	.02+
	1.050	.790	JOR.GULF BANK	4.8	8.75	5	3750	2964	.80	.80	-
	4.050	3.480	JOR.ISLAMIC BANK	14.8	3.31	6	1550	5625	3.64	3.63	.01-
	3.800	3.000	JOR.INV.FIN.BANK	20.4	0.00	3	750	2378	3.17	3.17	-
	BANK SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 194.16	%CHG: -0.60		55	49960	190185			
	2.800	1.850	YARMOUK INSUR.	9.8	8.11	2	1750	3238	1.85	1.85	-
	INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 114.03	%CHG: 0.00		2	1750	3238			
	1.820	1.450	JOR.ELECTRIC PWR.	8.0	6.02	9	5450	8994	1.66	1.66	-
	1.480	.930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	g	0.00	74	111970	128465	1.11	1.17	.06+
	9.300	6.900	ALRA'I	12.5	7.14	2	242	1694	7.00	7.00	-
	2.200	1.170	MID. EAST HOTELS	20.1	0.00	1	850	1122	1.32	1.32	-
	3.720	2.900	ARAB INTL.INV.EDUC.	8.0	0.00	1	50	153	3.03	3.05	.02+
	1.220	.960	ZARKA EDUCATION	g	0.00	6	12250	12005	.98	.98	-
	2.230	1.630	UNIFIED CO.	7.9	6.59	2	800	1336	1.65	1.67	.02+
	SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 110.86	%CHG: +0.35		95	131612	153768			
	1.250	.930	ATTANQEEB	g	0.00	1	200	196	1.00	.98	.02-
T	3.820	3.060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	26.5	2.80	123	154837	600263	3.80	3.93	.13+
	3.500	2.710	JOR.PHOSPHATE MINES	9.7	2.86	9	31950	110223	3.40	3.50	.10+
	6.350	4.950	ARAB POTASH CO.	14.8	3.15	7	14800	93975	6.35	6.35	-
	10.400	8.720	JOR. PETROL.REFINARY	9.0	9.56	11	730	6786	9.31	9.30	.01-
	1.510	1.150	WOOLEN INDUSTRIES	54.6	0.00	1	250	308	1.28	1.23	.05-
	3.260	1.650	INDUSTRIAL COMM.AGR.	g	0.00	2	550	1045	1.90	1.90	-
	3.980	3.040	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	10.1	5.43	18	6700	24550	3.66	3.68	.02+
+	2.100	1.410	JOR.PIPES MANFCT.	17.4	5.71	3	1100	1540	1.41	1.40	.01-
	5.910	4.250	DAR ALDAWA DV.INV.	11.6	5.27	8	1900	8891	4.69	4.74	.05+
	.960	.450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	10.8	0.00	2	1750	893	.51	.51	-
	1.310	1.020	ARAB PAPER CONV.TRD.	32.4	0.00	1	250	265	1.06	1.06	-
	.870	.540	NATIONAL INDS.	8.0	11.11	11	11300	6105	.56	.54	.02-
	1.540	.700	INTERMED.PETRO.CHEM.	g	0.00	3	400	284	.72	.71	.01-
	1.170	.570	JOR. SULPHO-CHEM	g	0.00	6	1750	1108	.63	.63	-
	1.670	1.120	ARAB PHARM.CHEM.	18.6	4.79	14	2800	4035	1.41	1.46	.05+
	2.660	1.410	UNIV. MODN.INDS.	P	.18	28	7200	10216	1.45	1.41	.04-
	1.730	1.130	JOR.INDS.RESOURCES	15.6	8.62	7	1950	2262	1.15	1.16	.01+
	1.230	.840	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	15.9	0.00	6	4250	3683	.86	.87	.01+
	1.330	1.080	INTL. TOBACCO	27.5	0.00	1	1000	1170	1.17	1.17	-
	1.380	.860	UNION CH. & VEG.	27.9	0.00	1	150	132	.89	.88	.01-
	INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 122.42	%CHG: +1.07		264	245829	878007			
	GRAND TOTAL		INDEX: 156.13	%CHG: +0.13		416	429151	1225198			

PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUSEDAY 20/05/1997

	.790	.410	JOR.TRADE FAC.	12.0	0.00	3	2000	900	.45	.45	-
	.840	.660	UNION INV. 50%	g	0.00	7	19564	3171	.67	.66	.01-
	.810	.370	ARAB FIN.INVEST.	g	0.00	18	40650	19106	.48	.47	.01-
N	.950	.610	AL-DAWLIYAH 75%	14.5	0.00	3	1450	563	.64	.64	-
	.730	.510	ARAB FOOD & MED.	g	0.00	3	500	275	.55	.55	-
	.690	.430	ARAB INTL.INV.TRD.	53.0	0.00	2	1000	460	.46	.46	-
	.720	.490	NATL. TEXTILE	g	0.00	5	3356	1678	.50	.50	-
	.810	.400	NATL.MULT.ENG.NAMICO	E	0.00	11	51100	27594	.54	.54	-
	.970	.710	JORDAN STEEL	E	0.00	5	3200	2275	.71	.71	-
	.630	.430	ARAB ELECT.INDS.	P	0.00	1	500	250	.50	.50	-
	1.280	.860	UNION TOBACCO 75%	E	0.00	8	7500	4650	.87	.87	-
	.770	.550	RAZI PHARM. 85%	E	0.00	2	600	264	.59	.59	-
	.620	.390	INDS. ENG.	25.9	0.00	3	3600	1512	.41	.42	.01+
	.760	.550	PEARL SAN. P. CONV.	E	0.00	2	145	81	.57	.57	-
	.820	.590	NATL. POULTRY	E	0.00	6	1450	943	.66	.65	.01-
N	1.000	.810	NAT.ALUMINIUM. 75%	P	0.00	27	10189	6255	.85	.88	.03+
	.870	.530	MID.EAST COMPLEX	7.7	0.00	17	16050	10593	.66	.66	-
	GRAND TOTAL					123	162854	80568			

T : New 12 months high
+ : New 12 months low
N : Listed during the past 12 months
P : P/E ratio is 100 or more
g : Negative P/E
E : Earning is zero or N/A for the most recent year

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THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

"This necktie is everyone's favorite. It has a stain that looks just like the boss in a clown suit."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

ORMUF

MAORA

RULSAW

ZURQAT

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Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here : A

(Answers Monday)

Yesterday's Jumbles: CHASM SKUNK FURROW BUCKET
Answer: When commodities plunged the broker suffered this – FUTURES SHOCK

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Trouble at top in tennis rankings for French Open

PARIS (AP) — The WTA and ATP Tour released Monday the tennis rankings that determine the seedings for the French Open but there is a lot of uncertainty at the top of the list.

Pete Sampras, expected to be top-seeded in the Grand Slam tournament that begins Monday, May 26, has lost his only two matches on clay this year.

Martina Hingis, No. 1 on the women's side, hasn't had any clay court matches as she is scheduled to return after a knee injury from a horse riding accident, April 21.

The organising committee for the two-week tournament usually goes along with the tennis rankings of the professional tennis associations despite the recent form of many players on clay. The actual draw and the final seedings will be on Friday.

Sampras's tournament victories are mostly on fast surfaces, including the last two grand slams — the U.S. and Australian Opens.

However he lost his first matches at the Monte Carlo Open and Italian Open. Michael Chang, No. 2, is coming off a loss at the Italian Open.

The list goes on.

No. 3, Yevgeny Kafelnikov, last year's French open winner, is struggling after breaking his hand just before the Australian Open. No. 4 Goran Ivanisevic has just returned after breaking his finger.

Thomas Muster, the 1995 French Open champion and usually dominant on clay, has not found his form on the surface this season. No. 6 Richard Krajicek, the reigning Wimbledon champion, is better on grass.

Marcelo Rios of Chile and Alex Corretja No. 7 and No. 8, are the first contenders in form. They took turns beating each other in major clay court finals. Rios won Monte Carlo and Corretja took the Italian Open.

There are four more Spanish players in the next eight. Carlos Moya, No. 10, Felix Mantilla, No. 13, Albert Costa and No. 14 Alberto Berasategui.

Thomas Enqvist, No. 9, Boris Becker, No. 12, Wayne Ferreira No. 15, and Todd Martin, No. 16 round out the top 16.

However, Martin has withdrawn from the French Open and Tim Henman, No. 17, is expected to be seeded.

Dangerous players who will probably be unseeded and able to meet a seeded player as early as the first round include Jim Courier and Sergi Bruguera, both with two French titles each, and Andre Agassi, who has been erratic at best this year.

The women also have their troubles.

Steffi Graf, who has won the French five times including the last two, is coming off the worst loss of her career at Berlin after being sidelined with a knee injury since February.

She lost the No. 1 ranking to Hingis, who won the Australian Open and is unbeaten this year in six tournaments.

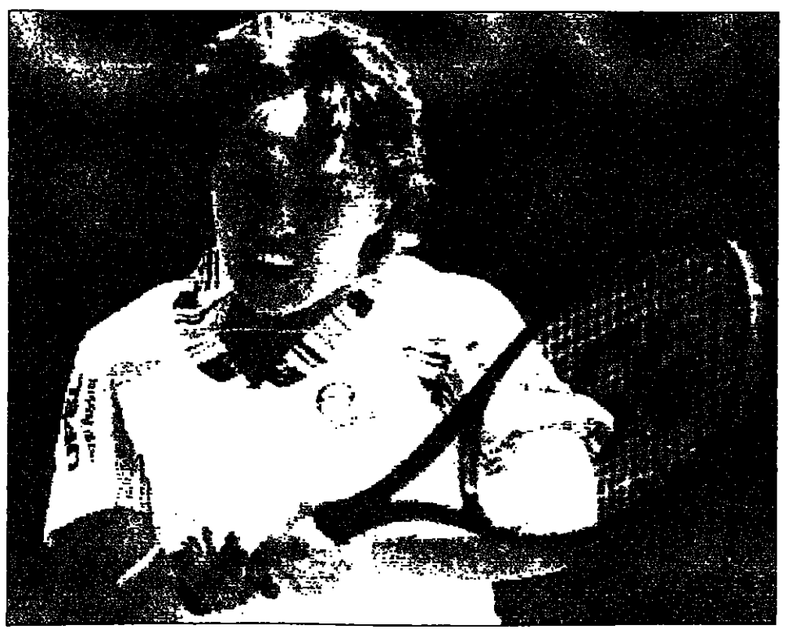
Monica Seles is No. 3 and is uneven this year.

Jana Novotna is fourth followed by Lindsay Davenport, Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, Conchita Martinez and Anke Huber.

Mary Pierce, who won the Italian Open and lost in the Berlin final, is 10th.

Steffi Graf

Micheal Chang



Martina Hingis

Sampras doubtful for Rolland Garros

DUSSELDORF, Germany (AFP) - Pete Sampras's participation in next week's French Open was thrown into doubt Monday when a groin injury forced him to retire from his match against Australia's Mark Philippoussis in the world team championship here.

Sampras was forced to leave the court when leading 1-0 in the third set.

The World No. 1 had earlier won the first set 6-4 before losing the second, also 6-4.

The American, already struggling on clay this season after poor recent performances in Monte Carlo and Rome, said after having the injury examined:

"After what's happened to me here, can I play Paris? I just don't know."

His withdrawal meant Australia levelled their group match with the United States at 1-1.

Sampras' injury eclipsed the rest of the day's action as Germany went down 2-1 to the Netherlands.

The World No. 1 had appeared to be moving slowly from the start as he faced Philippoussis, who slams down his first serves at 228 km/h.

Michael Chang, world number two, had earlier scored a 6-3, 4-6, 7-5 win over Mark Woodforde. Tuesday's doubles will decide the outcome of the tie, although Australia will be favourites with their vastly experienced tandem of Woodforde and Todd Woodbridge.

Germany meanwhile, without the injured Boris Becker, who will miss the French Open, handed the honours to their Dutch opponents even though Michael Stich opened with a 6-3, 6-2 win over Jan Siemerink.

But David Prinosil lost 5-7, 4-6 to Paul Haarhuis and Haarhuis then partnered Jacco Eltingh to see off Stich and Martin Sinner 6-2, 6-3 in the decisive doubles.

Pete Sampras

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Atletico table Juninho bid

MADRID (AFP) — Atletico Madrid said Tuesday they had made a formal bid of eight million pounds ($13 million) to relegated English side Middlesbrough for their Brazilian midfielder Juninho. A club spokesman said they expected the player's father, who is acting as his agent, to come to Madrid later this week to talk terms. Atletico were reported to have offered Juninho 40,000 pounds ($65,000) a week, after tax, in a four-year deal. However, English champions Manchester United were reportedly ready to offer Middlesbrough 16 million pounds ($26 million) for the 24-year-old to replace French star Eric Cantona, who has announced his retirement.

Barcelona say no to Koeman testimonial

THE HAGUE (AFP) — Cup Winners Cup winners Barcelona have turned down an invitation from Feyenoord to play a testimonial on August 9 for the Catalan giants' former sweeper Ronald Koeman, the Dutch club said Monday. Koeman, who returned to the Netherlands last year after several successful years with Barca under Johan Cruyff, is retiring this summer at the age of 34. He scored the goal which won Barca the European Cup at Wembley in 1992 when Cruyff's men defeated Sampdoria. Barca officials said they could not fit in the August date as they, like Feyenoord, are likely to be in action in the preliminary round of the Champions League on the 13th, assuming they come second in the Spanish League.

Ronaldo may head for Inter, Baggio for Man Utd.

MILAN (AFP) — Brazilian star Ronaldo could be on his way from Barcelona to Inter Milan next season, the Italian press reported Tuesday, while Manchester United have their eyes on Roberto Baggio.

Ronaldo, whose goals have guided Barcelona to the European Cup Winners' Cup and second place in the Spanish League, is widely expected to leave the Catalan club at the end of the season.

Serie A rivals Lazio had been a front-runner for the 20-year-old, but all three of Italy's sports newspapers reported on Tuesday that Inter President Massimo Moratti has matched their offer.

The Spanish club are expected to ask $25 million to $30 million for FIFA's world player of the year, while Ronaldo himself is demanding a four million dollar a year salary. The contract would run until 2005.

Moratti's interest comes only a year after he withdrew from negotiations to buy Ronaldo from Dutch club PSV Eindhoven, claiming the hugely talented striker was too expensive.

At the time, the Brazilian would have cost just under $20 million to buy, with a two million dollar salary. And his goalscoring skills might have put Roy Hodgson's side top of the Serie A this year instead of third.

However, Ronaldo's future was not the only one to shake the Italian transfer market on Tuesday.

With Eric Cantona unexpectedly announcing his retirement on Sunday, Manchester United have reportedly joined Olympique Marseille as candidates to buy Baggio from AC Milan.

Baggio, only now sure of a regular first team place, has so far shown little appetite for English football.

However, the pony-tailed striker would be guaranteed Champions League football next season with Alex Ferguson, while Milan would be willing to trade if United's offer for the 30-year-old is big enough.

The problem with Marseille's interest is that the French club have signed up with Adidas, while Baggio has a long-term flagship commitment with sportswear rivals, Diadora.

Barcelona keep the heat on

VIGO, Spain (AFP) — Barcelona kept the heat on Spanish title favourites Real Madrid late Monday as they won 3-1 at Celta Vigo to stand five points adrift of their rivals with four games to play.

Oscar led the way for Bobby Robson's Cup Winners Cup Winners with a brace of first half goals, and, although Michael Revivo pulled one back, the Catalan giants' Rotterdam hero Ronaldo secured the win with his side's third.

On Sunday, a Davor Suker penalty had kept Real on track as they secured a 1-0 win over a resilient Valladolid side at the Bernabeu.

Deportivo La Coruna and Betis are both five points behind Barcelona in third and fourth spot. But both dropped points Sunday, Deportivo in a disappointing goalless draw at home to Sporting Gijon and Betis in the Seville derby against struggling Sevilla.

Betis were left kicking themselves for letting slip a two-goal lead in the dying seconds as Salvador Salva and Jesus Galvan struck to snatch an unlikely point for Sevilla.

Reigning champions Atletico Madrid gained a 1-1 draw at Real Sociedad to stay fifth.

Elsewhere, Chelsea-bound Uruguayan star Gustavo Poyet scored Real Zaragoza's winner in a 2-1 triumph at racing Santander.

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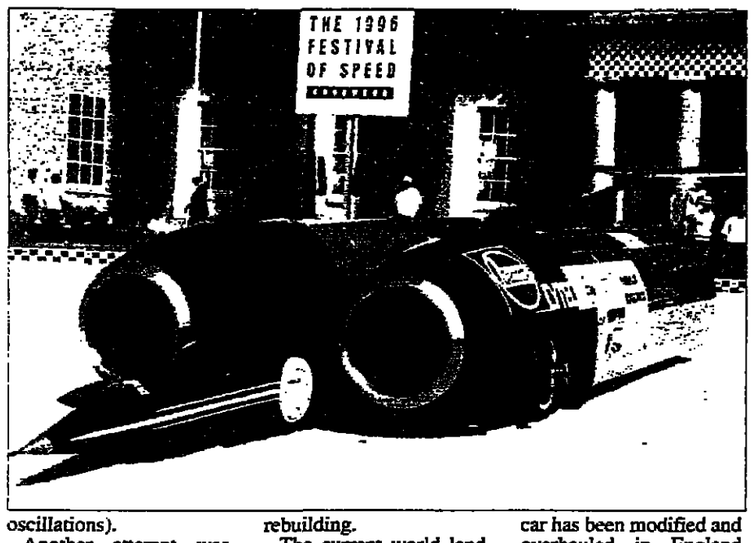
Supersonic car due in Jafr today

Thrust SSC team goes for record again

By Roufan Nabhas
Special to the Jordan Times



AMMAN — The Thrust SSC returns to Jordan Wednesday with the aim of breaking the land speed record of 1.100 kilometres per hour (650 mph).

Previously scheduled to arrive on May 3, the supersonic car's arrival was delayed for technical reasons.

The team will arrive Al Jafr Air Base led by Richard Noble, the current world speed record holder, and will stay for three weeks.

The team's initial attempt was put on halt back in November due to heavy rains that flooded the area at Al Jafr.

After months of preparation, the team's first attempt was abandoned after reaching a speed of 500 kilometres per hour.

The Thrust team had arrived in Jordan Oct. 26, 1996 and after 16 days of preparation the first run was achieved on Nov. 12 at a speed of 368 kph (230 mph).

Maximum subsequent speed achieved was 529 kph (331 mph) when the car exhibited rear wheel shimmy (rapid steering oscillations).

Another attempt was aborted for the same reason later on.

By improving the suspension system, the car was ready to run but the floods prevented the crucial run.

The Thrust SSC team are in competition with the U.S. and Australian team to achieve the first ever supersonic 1210 kph (750 mph) world land speed record.

The U.S. team reached 675 mph but subsequently crashed and are now into rebuilding.

The current world land speed record is 1019.44 kph (633.468 mph) held by Richard Noble, project director of Thrust SSC since Oct. 4 1983.

Driven by British fighter pilot Andy Green, Thrust SSC weighs 10 tonnes has 106,000hp, twin jet engines, hydraulic suspension, active computer-controlled ride and rear wheel steering making it the most powerful car ever built.

The land speed record car has been modified and overhauled in England this winter and the team are now are now ready to return to Al Jafr to have further trials.

The team was helped by the Jordanian Armed Forces in paving the track where the attempt took place.

The Thrust team now return with high hopes of good weather to assist them in their record breaking attempt.

Most trials will be run early in the morning when conditions are best.

Well rested Utah cruise past tired Houston

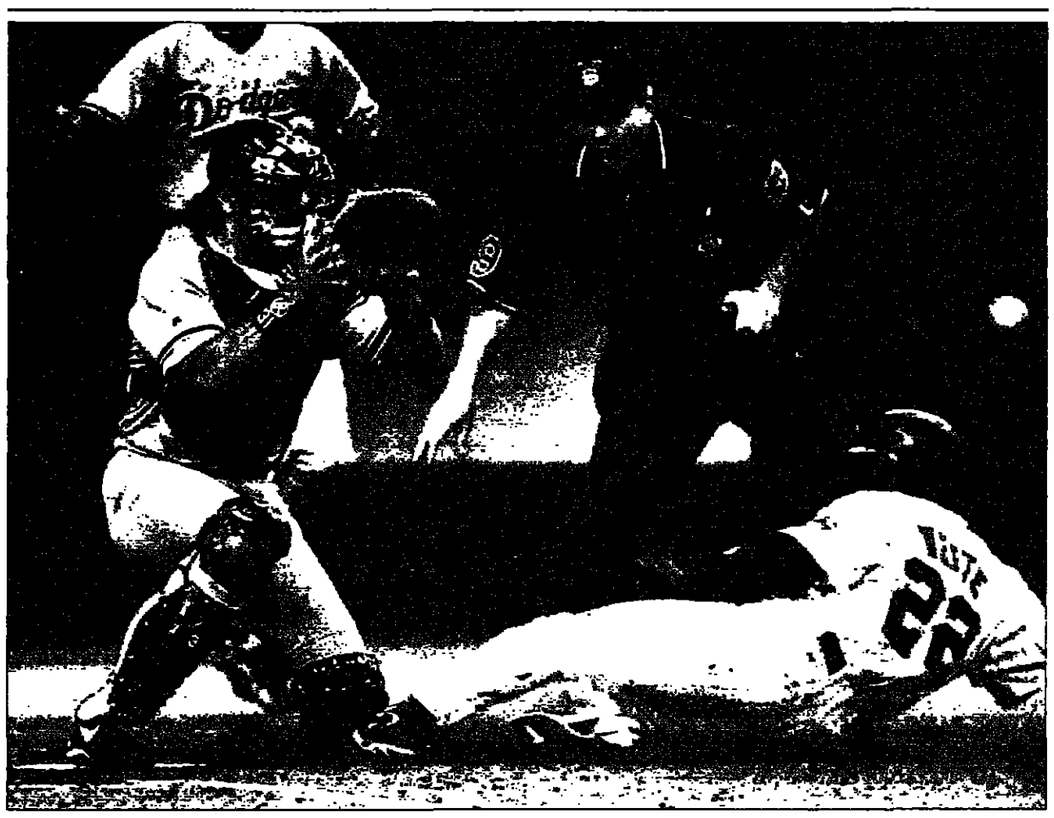
SALT LAKE CITY (AFP) — Jeff Hornacek scored 12 of his 19 points in the third quarter as the Utah Jazz cruised past the Houston Rockets, 101-86 in game one of the Western Conference finals.

For the third time in as many series, Jazz opened with an easy win. They remained unbeaten in six playoff games at the Delta Center where they have not lost in 19 games since February 23rd. Game two is Wednesday at Utah.

Karl Malone shook off a wrist injury to score 21 points and John Stockton added 16 for the Jazz, who took the lead for good early in the second quarter and led by as many as 21 points. The Jazz received 31 points from their bench, including 11 from Shandon Anderson.

Utah had four days rest before opening the first round with a 20-point win over the Los Angeles Clippers. It had six days off before a 16-point win over the Los Angeles Lakers in the opener of the Conference semifinals, a series the Jazz closed out last Monday.

Hakeem Olajuwon scored 30 points — none in the fourth quarter — for the Rockets, who appeared tired after eliminating Seattle in Game Seven on Saturday. Charles Barkley and Clyde Drexler combined for just 25 points.



Los Angeles Dodgers' catcher Mike Piazza takes the throw as Montreal Expos' Rondell White slides home to score the winning run from third base on a single by Henry Rodriguez, during sixth inning action in Montreal. Home plate umpire Brian Gorman makes the call on the play. The Expos went on to defeat the Dodgers 2-1 (Reuters photo)

French sailor breaks round-the-world record

BREST (R) — French sailor Olivier De Kersauzon and a crew of six set a new around-the-world sailing record on Monday, circling the globe in 71 days, 14 hours, 18 minutes and eight seconds in his sport-elec trimaran yacht.

The previous record, set by New Zealander Sir Peter Blake three years ago, was 74 days 22 hours and 17 minutes. Kersauzon's yacht crossed the finish line at 6.59 a.m. GMT, making it the winner of the Jules Verne trophy, offered for sailing around the world in under 80 days.

Named after author Jules Verne's 1872 novel around the world in 80 days, the race ends at an imaginary line across the English Channel between the southernmost tip of Britain's Lizard Point and France's Ouessant Island.

Tens of thousands of fans were expected to welcome them in a few hours on their arrival in the port of Brest, western France, which they left on March 4.

Blake, on his trimaran Enza-New Zealand, had beaten de Kersauzon in 1994. Blake that year broke a record of 79 days six hours and 15 minutes set a year earlier by France's Bruno Peyron on his trimaran Commodore Explorer.

French sailor Olivier de Kersauzon (L) and his crew members (R to 2nd L) Thomas Coville, Yves Pouillaude and Didier Gainette celebrate on the deck of his Sport-Elec trimaran yacht on arrival in Brest, Brittany. De Kersauzon set a new round-the-world sailing record, circling the globe in 71 days, 14 hours, 18 minutes and eight seconds, beating the previous record set by Blake (Reuters photo)

Mariners rout Angels 13-4

ANAHEIM, California (AP) — Joey Cora extended his hitting streak to 15 games Monday night by going 4-for-4, including a homer and a two-run double, as the Seattle Mariners routed the Anaheim Angels 13-4.

Jay Buhner and Paul Sorrento also homered for the Mariners, who ended their four-game losing skid and halted a seven-game winning streak by the Angels.

Seattle's Jamie Moyer, almost unbeatable since last July, settled down after giving up a three-run homer to Dave Hollins in the first inning.

Moyer went six innings, giving up four runs on seven hits before leaving with a 7-3 lead. He won for the 13th time in 15 decisions dating back to the all-star break last summer.

Cora's second-inning double tied it 3-3 and his homer in the fifth put the Mariners ahead 4-3. Cora, who also scored twice, is 28-for-60 during his hitting streak, raising his average from .247 to .345.

Mark Langston (2-3) was tagged for seven runs and six hits in 5 2-3 innings.

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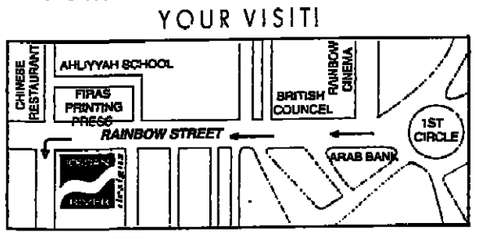

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Fastlink Launches International Roaming

Jordan Mobile Telephone Services (Fastlink) announces the launch of International Roaming Services. This service will allow Fastlink subscribers to use their mobile phones while traveling to other countries that have **GSM** services.

The roaming agreement signed between Bahrain Telephone Company (BATELCO) and Jordan Mobile Telephone Services (Fastlink) is a historic first in the country. Similar services with other countries will be in place within the coming weeks.

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Kabila lands in Kinshasa airport welcomed by tens of thousands of supporters

KINSHASA (R) — Self-proclaimed President Laurent Kabila flew into Kinshasa's Ndjili International Airport in darkness, touching down at about 6:50 p.m. after crossing the vast country he now controls from east to west, a flight of some two hours.

He was met by officials of his Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL) who flew in earlier from the provisional rebel capital of Lubumbashi, near the border with Zambia.

Officials expect Kabila to address the five million people of the capital, and the rest of the nation of 47 million, later this week.

Tens of thousands of residents of the Zaire capital walked to the airport on Tuesday hoping to catch a first glimpse of President Kabila but were turned back by rebel troops, witnesses said.

Crowds started surging towards the airport on the eastern outskirts of the city of five million people following rumours that Mr. Kabila was due to fly in from southern Lubumbashi.

Kabila's rebel soldiers, who captured Kinshasa at the weekend after a seven-month guerrilla advance from the Rwandan border, blocked the way near the airport.

South Africa, which mediated between Mr. Kabila and ousted dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, announced on Monday that Mr. Kabila would arrive to unveil a new government for the renamed Democratic Republic of Congo.

The independent Kinshasa daily Reference Plus on Tuesday reproduced the South African announcement on its front page.

The victorious rebel alliance had promised to establish a transitional government by Tuesday, but there was no indication as of the early evening that an administration team was about to be announced.

NEWSPAPER EDITOR BEATEN UP: Nidal Mansour, editor-in-chief of 'Al Hadath' weekly newspaper, carried away after security forces used force to disperse a sit-in in front of the Prime Ministry Tuesday. The sit-in was called by the Jordan Press Association in protest of the new Press and Publications Law (see story on page 1) (Photo by Yousef 'Allan)

British nurses plead 'not guilty' as court examines confessions

KHOBAR (AFP) — Two British nurses who could face the death penalty if convicted of murdering an Australian colleague appeared in a Saudi court for the second day Tuesday after pleading not guilty.

The British embassy — represented in the Islamic court in Khobar, eastern Saudi Arabia by Consul General William Patey — said the trial was adjourned until Sunday.

Lawyers for defendants Deborah Parry and Lucille McLaughlan and the family of the victim, 55-year-old senior theatre nurse Yvonne Gilford, also attended the hearing, an embassy spokesman said. But journalists were not allowed into the courtroom.

The public prosecutor's office was to have submitted evidence in the case Tuesday, after the initial session when the Gilfords' lawyer called for the death penalty and the British nurses pleaded not guilty. A British diplomat said Parry and McLaughlan, who have been held in prison for almost six months, had no complaints over the conditions in jail or their health when meeting Mr. Patey, who is second in charge of the Riyadh embassy.

Parry, 41, and McLaughlan, 31, who could be beheaded in public if found guilty, have said an earlier confession had been extracted under duress.

Their lawyers said the panel of three judges began to "hear evidence as to the circumstances in which the two British nurses made written statements while in police custody and which they have subsequently withdrawn. "Saudi Arabian courts are the ultimate authority on evaluating confessions and declaring justice in accordance with" the Sharia laws of Islam, the firm of Salah Al Hejailan said in a statement.

The women, who arrived at the start of the trial Monday handcuffed, with shackles on their ankles and in long black Islamic cloaks, are accused of killing Gilford . Dec. 11. She was found stabbed and battered in her dormitory room of King Fahd Military Medical Complex in Dhahran, near Khobar.

In April, the defence asked the victim's brother, Frank Gilford, to "come to Saudi Arabia at the expense of Mr. Hujailan to familiarise himself with the situation and to meet certain judicial officials." Under Islamic law in Saudi Arabia, the victim's family may demand the death penalty or grant mercy and take "blood money." The family in Australia has so far made it clear that they do not favour mercy.

"The Gilford family were a part of the Western culture and it would be inappropriate for them to take advantage of an Islamic religious tradition to which they do not belong," the Hujailan firm said.

Turkish army to expel hundred Islamist officers

ANKARA (AFP) — The pro-secular Turkish military's highest decision-making body will expel more than 100 Islamist officers from the army at a meeting scheduled for next week, a newspaper said Tuesday.

The Supreme Military Council, which groups top military commanders, will review measures against efforts by illegal Islamist organisations "to infiltrate into the military" next Monday, the liberal Istanbul Daily Milliyet said.

Over 100 officers involved in Islamist activities are expected to be expelled from the army, it said. Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, who is involved in a bitter row with the military over creeping Islamisation in Turkey, is technically the head of the Supreme Military Council and must ratify the council's decisions before they take effect. However, political analysts said Mr. Erbakan was likely to sign the council moves in an effort to avoid further confrontation with the military commanders, who see themselves as the guardians of modern Turkey's secular heritage.

The council expelled nearly 60 other Islamist officers from the army at its last meeting in December, and Mr. Erbakan approved the move. The military urged Mr. Erbakan's Islamist-led government to implement a measures package to curb rising Islamic radicalism.

The measures include the closure of state-run secondary schools with Islamic education, the sacking of religious extremists from the state service and a ban on fundamentalist propaganda by televisions.

In addition, the military has urged municipalities controlled by Mr. Erbakan's pro-Islamist Welfare Party to stop recruiting Islamist ex-officers sacked by the army.

However, reluctance by Welfare to implement the measures has escalated tensions.

Iran whipped up into election frenzy for 4 eligible candidates

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's presidential election campaign is heating up four days before this strict Shiite country goes to the polls, in a frenzy of rumours, arrests and bitter jousting between the two main candidates.

With more than half of the 64 million population aged 15 and over eligible to vote, Friday's poll has stirred up an interest among the nation's youth not seen since the 1979 Islamic revolution, leading to at least 300 arrests for "electoral offences."

Four candidates, all of them loyal to the Islamic republic, have been allowed to run, but 234 other hopefuls were disqualified because they did not meet the regime's ideological and technical criteria.

The two leading contenders, Ali Akbar Nategh-Nuri — the favourite of Iran's powerful conservative establishment — and moderate former Culture Minister Mohammad Khatami, have been engaged in a vicious battle in the past two months.

Iranian authorities have called for a massive turnout to show support for the Islamic republic, and President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani warned against voter apathy, saying participation was a "national and Islamic duty."

In reply, young people have turned out in force for the campaign, plastering posters of their chosen candidate on walls, cars and shop windows, as music blares from their vehicles.

Iranian police have arrested more than 300 people, mainly youngsters, accused of electoral offences during the campaign, the press reported Monday.

Tehran police Chief General Yussef Reza Mir Abolfathi said in the capital alone 280 people were arrested, while other sources said around 100 others had been apprehended in several provincial towns.

At the weekend, many young people were picked up for supporting their candidate while pumping out "depraved music" from their cars, when many Iranians were in mourning to mark the Shiite feast of Ashura.

The official Iranian news agency IRNA quoted a judicial official as saying that some of those arrested were caught red-handed ripping down campaign posters put up by opposing candidates.

Others had pasted posters of Mr. Khatami on the windscreens of their cars.

Supporters of Mr. Nuri and Mr. Khatami, both clergymen and 53 years old, have also been spreading numerous rumours about what their opponent will do if he takes over from Mr. Rafsanjani, in power since 1989.

One rumour circulating among students is that girls will have to wear black from head-to-toe chadors in place of the hijab, a simple scarf, if current parliamentary speaker Mr. Nuri wins Friday.

Conservatives in turn denounce supporters of Mr. Khatami as "liberal," a pejorative term in Iran's political vocabulary and as counter-revolutionaries.

They are accused of laxity towards revolutionary values and are suspected of wanting to make overtures towards the United States, Tehran's arch-enemy which maintains a total embargo on Iran.

Mr. Khatami, forced to resign as culture minister in 1992 under pressure from conservatives and hardliners, has made personal freedom, democracy and the rule of law the main themes of his platform.

But he faces a daunting task of beating Mr. Nuri, who has a spotless revolutionary record and is close to Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The liberal Islamic opposition, which had given timid support to Mr. Khatami, is now urging the population to leave their ballot papers blank.

The call by the movement for the liberation of Iran — which is pushing for more democracy and overtures towards the United States — is in protest at the authorities' rejection of their candidates.

Campaigning is due to wind up on the Wednesday evening before the poll, also being contested by outsiders Mohammad Mohammadi Reyshahri, the former intelligence minister, and head of state registration organisation Reza Zavarei.

Battle over Israeli envoy job in U.S.

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's ambassador to the United States was summoned home for a meeting Tuesday with Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu amid reports he is to be replaced by peace negotiator Dore Gold.

Eliahu Ben Elissar, who took up the ambassador's job just eight months ago, was scheduled to meet Mr. Netanyahu late Tuesday "for consultations," an official in the prime minister's office said.

Mr. Ben Elissar's sudden return coincided with persistent rumours that Mr. Netanyahu is unhappy with his performance in Washington and wants to replace him.

Israel Radio and newspapers said the likeliest candidate to take up the sensitive diplomatic post was Dore Gold, an Israeli-American who has been Mr. Netanyahu's main advisor on negotiations with the Palestinians and Arab states.

Several reports said that the new candidate has been actively lobbying for the Washington job and was the source of media leaks about Mr. Netanyahu's displeasure with Mr. Ben Elissar.

In an interview given before he left Washington Monday night, Mr. Ben Elissar, 64, told the Israeli newspaper Yediot Aharonot that he would fight any attempt to replace him.

"There are those who are fixing their gaze on the post of ambassador in Washington and there are those in this embassy who are making sure the media knows this, but I can tell you the job is not going to be vacated and I intend to stay," he said.

The press reports said Mr. Netanyahu is considering a wider reshuffle which in addition to sending gold to Washington would involve appointing his outspoken media advisor David Bar-Illan as Israel's ambassador to the United Nations.

Mr. Ben Elissar could be offered the post of science minister, which has been vacant since right-wing firebrand Benny Begin resigned in January to protest Mr. Netanyahu's decision to hand most of the West Bank city of Hebron over to Palestinian rule.

Some reports said Mr. Ben Elissar might be named to the U.N. post, which has been vacant for several months.

Sudan parliament passes peace agreement

KHARTOUM (AFP) — The Sudanese National Assembly (parliament) has passed a peace agreement reached by the government and six south Sudanese rebel groups last April providing for self-determination for the region, the press reported Tuesday.

According to the papers, the parliament asked the head of state to arrange for the accord's implementation, including the appointment of a 25-member coordinating council. The council is to run affairs in southern Sudan during a four-year interim period at the end of which a referendum will be held inviting people to vote on unity or secession.

"The agreement has resolved the south Sudan question, has set the scene for a political relaxation, starting with the release of political detainees, and has helped improve relations with neighbouring countries," Riak Machar, the agreement's major signatory and chairman of the United Democratic Salvation Front (USDF), was quoted as telling parliament by the press.

Rushdie affair to haunt next Iranian president

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's death sentence against the British author Salman Rushdie will continue to plague relations between the Islamic republic and the European Union after a new president is elected here this week.

Stringent Islamists here have already challenged the two leading candidates — parliamentary speaker Ali Akbar Nategh-Nuri and former Culture Minister Mohammad Khatami — to state publicly whether they plan to carry out a decree by the late Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khameini to kill Mr. Rushdie.

Khameini issued a fatwa, or religious decree, in 1989 condemning the writer to death for his novel "The Satanic Verses," judged blasphemous by many Muslims.

Jomhuri Islami, a hardline newspaper which spearheads a media campaign here against Mr. Rushdie, called on the candidates last week to "clearly state whether they intend to remain loyal to Imam's (Khomeini's) groundbreaking fatwa."

"It was one of Imam's dreams to see apostate Rushdie relegated to hell, and he was always worried that our government would seek a compromise on the issue," it said.

The paper, along with other strict Islamist circles, have steadfastly resisted and even cut off diplomatic initiatives from Tehran to reach a settlement on the affair, which has strained ties between Iran and European countries.

Only several months ago, the two sides were reportedly very close to a deal, but the issue has since been brushed aside, with Iran openly blaming Britain and several Scandinavian countries for lack of progress.

In a departure from Khameini's line, Iranian officials, including the establishment candidate Nuri, have repeatedly pledged they would not send hit-men to seek out Mr. Rushdie, although they insist they lack the religious authority to lift the fatwa.

But ahead of the presidential election, they have hardened their stand on the author, and even Mr. Nuri said early this month the decree would be implemented.

The fresh position was also sparked by the leak to the radical press of a meeting in London in February between an influential conservative parliament member, Mohammad Javad Larijani, and a British diplomat.

To appease the Europeans, Mr. Larijani, a top strategist here known for his moderate political views, allegedly said the Iranian government was not bound to execute the fatwa, and urged London to help close the file.

His alleged remarks outraged radical leftwing circles, who have since tried to exploit the issue to embarrass their conservative rivals, who favour Mr. Nuri for the presidency.

Mr. Larijani has denied making any conciliatory gestures on Mr. Rushdie, saying his remarks were distorted for electoral capital, but still his conservative allies have distanced themselves from his remarks.

The Foreign Ministry meanwhile remains silent on the issue and any new initiative to address the problem is unlikely until after the election, especially at a time when Iran is embroiled in a new crisis with the EU over its alleged involvement in international terrorism.

The writer, who has been living in hiding since the sentence was passed against him, has taken advantage of the existing mood in Europe against Iran and gone on the offensive.

In London on Monday, he accused European governments of giving Iran a "carte blanche... to plan other assassinations in Europe."

He was complaining about the limited European response to last month's finding by a Berlin court that top Iranian officials had ordered the 1992 assassination of four Kurdish opposition figures in a city restaurant.

COLUMN

Fifi insists she is still Egypt's top belly dancer

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt's most famous belly dancer and biggest tax-payer Fifi Abdo insisted Monday that no one can sway their hips like she does. "I have no competitors on the dance floor. There are dozens of dancers out there but this doesn't mean that if a girl sways her hips she is a dancer," a modest Abdo told the Egyptian government weekly Sabah Al Kheir. "I don't hold university degrees but I have a doctorate from the biggest university... the university of life," she said about her lack of formal education. Abdo also dismissed criticism that the money she earned was "haram." "My money is halal because I earn it thanks to my hard work," said Abdo, adding that 30 families depended on her handouts to survive. Fifi took in $1.32 million between 1993 and 1996, according to the Egyptian government weekly Al Mussawar.

Emirati teen jailed, to get whipped for beating mother

DUBAI (AFP) — A 19-year-old girl has been sentenced to a year in jail and 30 lashes for beating up her mother in a row over how she was dressed to go out, United Arab Emirates (UAE) newspapers reported Tuesday. An Islamic court in the Ras Al Khaimah emirate heard that the mother had ordered the teenager, a UAE national, "to put on decent clothes before leaving the house," sparking the fight, the daily Emirates News said. The court turned down the mother's appeal for leniency.

Streisand and Brolin seal wedding plans with a rock

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Singer Barbara Streisand and actor James Brolin were officially engaged last week and are planning to marry, CNN said. The couple sealed their engagement with a diamond ring. During an interview before the announcement, Brolin said he could "see my future married to Barbra and I think she can see her future married to me."

Australian billionaire deemed richest in L.A.

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Australian-American media magnate Rupert Murdoch has amassed a personal fortune of $3.2 billion, making him the richest man in Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Business Journal said. Movie makers in Tinsel Town came no higher than fourth in the list, with David Geffen, co-founder of the new Dreamworks Studio, topping the category at $2 billion. Steven Spielberg, a Geffen partner, came in sixth with $[illegible] billion.

Golfer Tiger Woods hits par $15 million

NEW YORK (AFP) — The golf whiz-kid Tiger Woods has landed a five-year endorsement deal with American Express reportedly worth $15 million. The company announced that Woods would become a spokesman without disclosing the terms of the deal. Brandweek magazine, however, said that Woods would be paid $3 million over five years.